

ST. FURSEY'S ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
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COMMUNITY PROGRAMME
MARCH 2016.



MARCH 25

The Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady,
the Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary

Dismissal Hymn. Fourth Tone

TODAY is the fountainhead of our salvation and the manifestation of the mystery which was from eternity. The Son of God becometh the Virgin's Son, and Gabriel proclaimeth the good tidings of grace; for this cause, we also cry to the Mother of God with him: Rejoice, thou who art full of grace; the Lord is with thee.

**BRITISH ORTHODOX SAINTS
COMMEMORATED IN
MARCH.**

(See selected lives of Saints on another page.)

- 01 Swithbert the Elder, Bishop of the Frisians
- 02 Chad, Bishop of Lichfield
- Cynibil, Confessor
- 04 Owen of Lichfield, Hermit
- 06 Baldred and Billfrith, Hermits
- Cyneburgh and Cyneswith, Abbesses of Castor and Tibba,
Anchoress
- 07 Eosterwine, Abbot of Wearmouth
- 08 Felix, Bishop of Dunwich
- 09 Bosa, Bishop of York
- 12 Alphege the Elder, Bishop of Winchester
- Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome and Apostle of the English
- 13 Gerald of Mayo, Abbot
- 16 Aristobulus the Holy Apostle, Bishop of Britain
- 17 Withburgh of Dereham, Virgin
- 18 Edward the Martyr, King of England
- Egbert of Ripon, Confessor
- 19 Alcmund, Martyr
- 20 Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne and Wonderworker of Britain
- Herbert of Derwentwater, Hermit
- 23 Ethilwald of Farne, Hermit
- 24 Hildelith, Abbess of Barking
- 25 Alfwold, Bishop of Sherborne
- 27 Alkeld, Martyr in Yorkshire
- 30 Osburgh, Abbess of Coventry

TROPARION OF ST. FURSEY.

Establishing thy monastery in a Roman fortress
thou didst teach men that the Orthodox Faith is
a true bastion against the onslaughts of every evil
force O Father Furse.

Wherefore pray to God for us that we may all be
bastions of the Faith standing firm against the rising
tide of falsehood that our souls may be saved.



Wells in Aleppo improve water supplies for Christians

A total of 23 wells in the Syrian city of Aleppo had been brought back into use or dug afresh in the grounds of churches and Christian institutions by the end of 2015, thanks to the generosity of Barnabas supporters. They will provide water for up to 200,000 people. The siting of the wells is important, so they can be managed by Christians and are protected from being poisoned or otherwise compromised.

Wells are vital, as mains water supplies - piped from Lake Assad - are often disrupted by bomb damage in the conflict that has ravaged the city, and some areas of Aleppo only receive mains water for a few hours, twice a month.

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Siting wells in church grounds protects the water supply

"In this context of violence, privation, desolation, suffering and despair, we continue, as Christian humanitarian committees in Aleppo and all over Syria, through our presence, our resistance, our support, our aid and our solidarity to be there for the people, a glimmer of hope in the darkness that surrounds us."

— Barnabas Christian partner in Aleppo

Iranian Christian released early from jail

In November 2015, the family of Suroush Saraie announced his early release from prison in Iran, where he had been serving a two-and-a-half year term. Arrested originally with six other Christians in October 2012 during a raid on a prayer meeting, he was found guilty of charges of "action against the national security" and "propaganda against the order of the system".

In July 2013 he was convicted and sentenced, a decision later upheld on appeal, and in July 2014 he was arrested and summoned to Adel Abad Prison in Shiraz to begin his jail term. The authorities released him from prison fourteen months early, and now Suroush and his family are praying that those arrested alongside him, who at the time of writing were still serving various sentences ranging from one to six years, would be released soon.

Many Iranian Christians are charged with security crimes as a pretext for detaining and punishing them.



A Syrian child collects water

ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

Small Vespers

On Lord, I have cried, *four stichera are sung*:

TONE FOUR

Taking pity upon that which He has made and bending down in His tender mercy, the Maker hastens to dwell in the womb of a Maiden, the Child of God. To her the great Archangel came, saying to her: 'Hail, O thou who art full of divine grace, our God is now with thee.¹ Be not afraid of me, the chief commander of the armies of the King. For thou hast found the grace that thy mother Eve once lost: and thou shalt conceive and bring forth Him who is one in essence with the Father' (*twice*).

Mary said to the Angel: 'Strange is thy speech and strange thine appearance, strange thy sayings and thy disclosures. I am a Maid who knows not wedlock, lead me not astray. Thou sayest that I shall conceive Him who remains uncircumscribed: and how shall my womb contain Him whom the wide spaces of the heavens cannot contain?' 'O Virgin, let the tent of Abraham that once contained God teach thee:² for it prefigured thy womb, which now receives the God-head.'

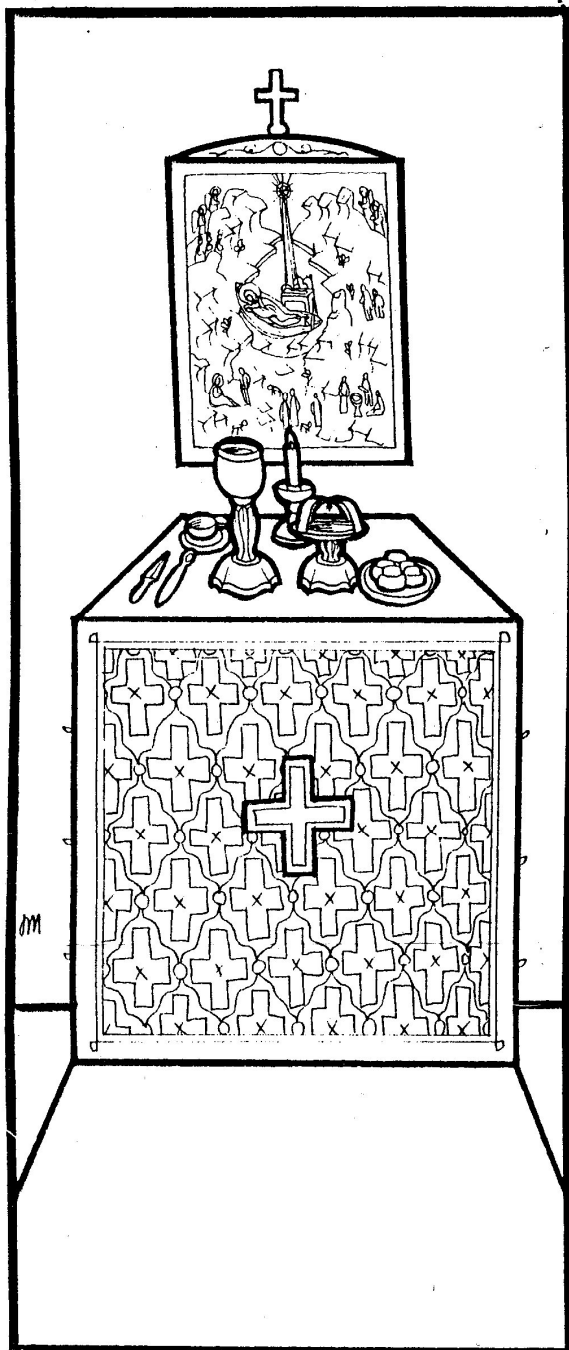
Glory be to the Father . . . Both now . . .

TONE ONE

(*by Byzas*)

In the sixth month the chief of the angelic hosts was sent to thee, pure Virgin, to declare unto thee the word of salvation and to greet thee, saying: 'Hail, thou who art full of grace: the Lord is with thee. Thou shalt bring forth a Son, begotten before the ages from the Father, and He shall save His people from their sins.'¹

3. Oblation Table



As we face the altar area the table of oblation on which the bread and wine are prepared for the liturgy stands on the left side of the altar table. The chalice—the cup for the wine—and the diskos—the round plate, elevated on a stand, for the bread—are kept on this table. These vessels are normally decorated with iconographic engravings, Christian symbols and the sign of the cross.

On this table there is also a special liturgical knife—symbolically called the **spear**—which is used for cutting the eucharistic bread, and a liturgical spoon for administering holy communion to the people. There are also special covers for the chalice and diskos and a cruciform piece of metal called the star which holds the cover over the eucharistic bread on the diskos. A sponge and cloths for drying the chalice after the liturgy are also usually kept here. The oblation table is decorated in a manner similar to that of the altar table.

Above the table of oblation (the table on which the gifts for holy communion are prepared), which stands in the altar area to the left of the altar table, one might find various icons. A favorite one is that of Christ praying in Gethsemane: "Let this cup pass..." Another is that of the Nativity, although this is due to a symbolical interpretation of the Divine Liturgy which is not indicative of the fundamental liturgical tradition of the Church. (See Chapter V on the Divine Liturgy.)

3. Icons

In the Orthodox Church the icons bear witness to the reality of God's presence with us in the mystery of faith. The icons are not just human pictures or visual aids to contemplation and prayer. They are the witnesses of the presence of the Kingdom of God to us, and so of our own presence to the Kingdom of God in the Church. It is the Orthodox faith that icons are not only permissible, but are spiritually necessary because "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14) Christ is truly man and, as man, truly the "icon of the invisible God." (Colossians 1:15; I Corinthians 11:7; II Corinthians 4:4)

The iconostasis or icon screen in the Orthodox Church exists to show our unity with Christ, his mother and all the angels and saints. It exists to show our unity with God. The altar table, which stands for the Banquet Table of the Kingdom of God, is placed behind the so-called royal gates, between the icons of the Theotokos and Child and the glorified Christ, showing that everything which happens to us in the Church happens in history between those "two comings" of Christ: between his coming as the Saviour born of Mary and his coming at the end of the age as the King and the Judge.

The icons on the royal gates witness to the presence of Christ's good news, the gospel of salvation. The four evangelists who recorded the gospels appear, and often also an icon of the Annunciation, the first proclamation of the gospel in the world. (In Greek the gospel is the *evangelion*, the authors of the gospels the *evangelistoi*, the annunciation the *evangelismos*.)

Over the doors we have the icon of Christ's Mystical Supper with his disciples, the icon of the central mystery of the Christian faith and the unity of the Church in the world. It is the visual witness that we too are partakers in the "marriage supper of the lamb" (Revelation 19:9), that we too are blessed by Christ "to

eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:30), blessed to "eat bread in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 14:15)

Over and around the central gates are icons of the saints. The deacon's doors in the first row (for the servants of the altar) usually have icons depicting deacons or angels, God's servants. The first row also has an icon of the person or event in whose honor the given building is dedicated, along with other prominent saints or events. Depending on the size of the iconostasis, there may be rows of icons of the apostles, the major feasts of the Church, the prophets and other holy people blessed by God, all crowned on the top by the cross of Christ.

In recent centuries the iconostasis in most Orthodox churches became very ornate and developed into a virtual wall, dividing the faithful from the holy altar rather than uniting them with it. In recent years this development has happily been altered in many places. The iconostasis in many church buildings now gives first place to the icons themselves and has become once more an icon "stand" or "screen" (*stasis*) rather than a solid partition.

Besides the iconostasis, Orthodox Church buildings often have icons or frescoes on the walls and ceilings. The "canon" of Church design is to have the icon of Christ the Almighty in the center of the building, and the icon of the Theotokos with Christ appearing within her found over the altar area. This latter icon is called the "image of the Church" since Mary is herself the prototype of the entire assembly of believers in whom Christ must dwell. In the altar area it is also traditional to put icons of the saints who composed Church liturgies and hymns. Directly behind the altar table there is usually an image of Christ in glory – enthroned or transfigured or resurrecting, and sometimes offering the eucharistic gifts.

SERVICES FOR MARCH.

FRI. MAR.4th. St. Gerasimos of the Jordan. Vespers.4pm.

SAT. MAR.5th.Saturday of Meatfare.Saturday of All Souls.

DIVINE LITURGY 10am followed by the Trisagion for the Departed.
(Meal after the Liturgy)

SUN.MAR.6th. SUNDAY OF MEATFARE and Sunday of the Last Judgement
VESPERS 4pm. (No meat until Pascha May 1st.)

SAT. MAR.12th. Saturday of Cheesefare Vespers 4pm

SUN. MAR.13th.SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE.The Expulsion of Adam from Paradise.
Forgiveness Sunday.

DIVINE LITURGY 10am followed by the Vespers of Forgiveness.

MON.MAR.14th. FIRST DAY OF LENT.

3rd. Hour with reading from the Fathers.9am.

6th. Hour 12 noon with reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

Vespers 4pm with readings from Genesis and Proverbs.

Compline 7pm with Canon of St.Andrew of Crete.

SAT. MAR.19th.FIRST SATURDAY OF LENT.(St. Theodore the Recruit)
Vespers 4pm.

SUN. MAR.20th.FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT. Sunday of Orthodoxy.
DIVINE LITURGY 10am. VESPERS 4pm.

THUR.MAR.24th.Forefeast of the Annunciation.

VESPERAL-DIVINE LITURGY 7pm (fast from 1pm)

FRI. MAR. 25th.ANNUNCIATION TO OUR MOST HOLY LADY THE THEOTOKOS.
TYPIKA 9am VESPERS 4pm.

SAT. MAR.26th.SECOND SATURDAY OF LENT (Synaxisof the Archangel Gabriel)
Vespers 4pm.

SUN.MAR.27th. SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.(St.Gregory of Palamas)
DIVINE LITURGY 10am VESPERS 4pm.

DAILY SERVICES AT ST. FURSEY'S CHAPEL

These are normally 3rd. Hour 9am with a reading from the early church Fathers,
6th Hour 12noon, Vespers 4pm. Compline 9pm when visitors are in residence on
retreat.Local readers are very welcome to attend these services especially during Lent
when they have a more penitential character with the Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian and
the prostrations which are apart of it . It is printed below for your use at home.

O LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE
 GRANT NOT TO ME A SPIRIT OF LAZINESS, OF DESPONDENCY,
 OF LUST OF POWER OR OF GOSSIPING. (prostration)
 BUT GRANT TO ME , THY SERVANT, THE SPIRIT OF PURITY,
 OF HUMILITY, OF PATIENCE AND OF LOVE.(prostration)
 YEA O LORD AND KING, GRANT THAT I MAY SEE MY OWN
 ERRORS AND TRANSGRESSIONS AND NOT JUDGE MY BROTHERS
 AND SISTERS, FOR BLESSED ART THOU UNTO THE AGES OF AGES,
 AMEN. (prostration)
 O GOD CLEANSE ME A SINNER(12 times with the sign of the cross and a bow
 each time then the whole prayer is repeated again with a final prostration)
 Orthodox Christians use this prayer at home in their icon corner on weekdays in Lent
 but it can be used to great benefit by all Christians.

COMMUNITY NEWS AND NOTICES.

THE MONDAY BIBLE STUDY.

Our change from Thursday to Monday seems to be working well. We meet in the library at St Fursey's House at 2.30pm. Tea break 3.39pm. Vespers 4pm we will finish about 4.45pm as the service is slightly longer during Lent.

MARKET STALLS IN NORWICH.

Our monthly markets in Norwich will resume on Wednesday April 1st. We have a break during the winter months to give us some time to replenish our stocks and to do other jobs. The stall is an important part of our Christian witness in this increasingly secular world so do please come along and visit us if you can and please remember us in your prayers. We sell mounted icon prints, books on Orthodox Spirituality, prayer ropes, DVDs and CDs and cards for various occasions.

AN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN STALHAM.

I have been in touch with Tesco's agent about some land in Stalham and he told me that there had been some complications with the sale of a nearby piece of land but it was expected that these would be resolved by the end of March and I should ring him then. He assured me that we had not been forgotten but these developments can often raise unforeseen issues which take time to resolve, so we have to be patient.

THE ENTHRONEMENT OF METROPOLITAN SILOUAN.

As I prepare this newsletter on February 15th. We look forward to this event with great excitement; since the founding of the Antiochian Orthodox Deanery in 1996 great progress has been made by the grace of God and it is a wonderful to be a part of the Patriarchate of Antioch whose founding is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles ;our present Patriarch; John X is the 167th. Successor to St. Peter in Antioch before he went to Rome. Metropolitan Silouan has now arrived in Britain and his enthronement will take place at the Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral of St. George Regent Park London on Saturday February 27th at 4.30pm. Several of St Fursey's people be going.

OTHER IMPORTANT EVENTS.

1. St Fursey's Pilgrimage to Peronne Mon. May 9th. to Fri. May 13th
2. Diocesan Conference with Metropolitan Silouan at Swanwick Mon. May 30th. to Wed. June 1st.
3. St. Fursey's Coffee Morning Thur. June 9th.
4. St. Fursey's Summer Pilgrimage Mon. June 18th. St. Walstan Bawburgh.

From a letter by Saint Leo the Great, pope

[Epist. 28 ad Flavianum, 3-4; PL 54, 763-767]

THE MYSTERY OF MAN'S RECONCILIATION WITH GOD

Lowliness is assured by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity. To pay the debt of our sinful state, a nature that is incapable of suffering was joined to one that could suffer. Thus, in keeping with the healing that we needed, one and the same mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, was able to die in one nature, and unable to die in the other.

He who is true God was therefore born in the complete and perfect nature of a true man, whole in his own nature, whole in ours. By our nature we mean what the Creator had fashioned in us from the beginning, and took to himself in order to restore it.

For in the Savior there was no trace of what the deceiver introduced and man, being misled, allowed to enter. It does not follow that because he submitted to sharing in our human weakness he therefore shared in our sins.

He took the nature of a servant without stain of sin, enlarging our humanity without diminishing his divinity. He emptied himself; though invisible he made himself visible, though Creator and Lord of all things he chose to be one of us mortal men. Yet this was the condescension of compassion, not the loss of omnipotence. So he who in the nature of God had created man, became in the nature of a servant, man himself.

Thus the Son of God enters this lowly world. He comes down from the throne of heaven, yet does not separate himself from the Father's glory. He is born in a new condition, by a new birth.

He was born in a new condition, for, invisible in his own nature, he became visible in ours. Beyond our grasp, he chose to come within our grasp. Existing before time began, he began to exist at a moment in time. Lord of the universe, he hid his infinite glory and took the nature of a servant. Incapable of suffering as God, he did not refuse to be a man, capable of suffering. Immortal, he chose to be subject to the laws of death.

He who is true God is also true man. There is no falsehood in this unity as long as the lowliness of man and the preeminence of God coexist in mutual relationship.

As God does not change by his condescension, so man is not swallowed up by being exalted. Each nature exercises its own activity, in communion with the other. The Word does what is proper to the Word, the flesh fulfills what is proper to the flesh.

One nature is resplendent with miracles, the other falls victim to injuries. As the Word does not lose equality with the Father's glory, so the flesh does not leave behind the nature of our race.

SELECTED LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

BOSA, bishop of York 678-86 and 691-705. This monk of Whitby was consecrated by *Theodore bishop of Deira (the southern half of Northumbria, roughly the equivalent of modern Yorkshire) when *Wilfrid had been expelled from Northumbria following his quarrels with King Egfrith. Bosa ruled his diocese until his death except for the years of Wilfrid's restoration. *Bede praised his 'singular merit and holiness'; one of his disciples was *Acca, later the follower and successor of Wilfrid at Hexham. Feast: 9 March.

Bede, *H.E.*, iv. 12; v. 19-20.

EOSTERWINE (650-86), abbot of Wearmouth. Of noble birth, he joined the service of Egfrith, king of Northumbria, and fought in his army. At the age of twenty-four he became a monk at Wearmouth, the monastery just founded by his cousin *Benedict Biscop. Here he followed all the regular observance, taking his full share in the menial tasks. He milked the cows and the sheep, he worked in bakehouse, garden, and kitchen, he shared in the harvesting and winnowing. In 679 he was ordained priest and in 682 he was appointed abbot by Biscop to rule during his own absence. As abbot, he was kind and accessible to all, just as he had been before his promotion. He had the same food and sleeping accommodation as the rest of his community and joined in the manual work. He died at the early age of thirty-six, on 6 March, while the community were at Matins. He was buried by the church-door, but his relics, with those of Benedict Biscop and *Sigfrid, were translated by *Ceolfrith to a shrine close to the high altar. His cult was mainly local but his name also occurs in the OE martyrology from Mercia. Feast: 7 March.

C. Plummer (ed.), *Baedae Opera Historica* (1956), i. 364-404; ii. 355-77; J. F. Webb and D. H. Farmer, *The Age of Bede* (1983).

ALKELDA (1) (Aethelred) (d. c.800). She was patron of the church of Middleham (Yorkshire), also of Giggleswick (West Riding). Edward IV's patent survives which enabled his brother Richard (subsequently Richard III) to set up the college of Middleham in honour of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Alkeld. Local tradition claimed that she was a Saxon princess (presumably a nun), who was strangled to death by Viking women and buried in the church at Middleham. Feast: 28 (27) March.

R. Challoner, *Memorials of Ancient British Piety* (1771), v: Stratton, p. 135.

WITHBURGA (1) (Witburh) (d. c.743), virgin. The youngest daughter of Anna, king of East Anglia and a sister of *Etheldreda, she lived as a solitary at Holkham (Norfolk), and later at East Dereham, where she is reputed to have founded a community and to have died before the buildings were completed. She was buried in the churchyard, but after fifty years her body was exhumed, found incorrupt and enshrined in the church.

In 974 Brithnoth, abbot of Ely, stole the body under the pretext that she would have wanted to be buried near her sisters. A band of his monks accompanied by soldiers went secretly by night to Dereham, having obtained the approval of King Edgar and *Ethelwold. They removed the body to their wagons, drove twenty miles to the river Brandun, on which they continued their journey by boat to the dismay of the men of Dereham, who had pursued them by land and could only watch helplessly while their treasure slipped away. The body was reburied at Ely where, however, the incorruption story was never exploited, as it might have detracted from Etheldreda's glory. In 1102 Withburga's relics were moved into the new part of the church; in 1106 they were joined by the bones of the other three Ely saints (Etheldreda, *Saxburga, and *Ermegild). The church at Holkham is dedicated to her; water in Withburga's well at Dereham churchyard was reputed to have sprung up when her body was first exhumed. Withburga's emblem in art, as on six Norfolk screens, is a tame doe, which William of Malmesbury described as her companion in solitude who provided her with milk. Feast: 17 March; translation 8 July.

ALFWOLD (d. 1058), monk of Winchester and bishop of Sherborne. William of Malmesbury recorded the following details, derived from a priest of his diocese who knew him. He was noted for his habitual abstinence at a time when self-indulgence was said to be general; he used at table common wooden platters and bowls. He was specially devoted to *Swithun, whose image he set up in the church at Sherborne, and to *Cuthbert, whose shrine he used to visit and whose antiphon he would often repeat. He quarrelled at least once with Godwin earl of Wessex, who was smitten with sudden illness and recovered only at the saint's pardon. After his death, the sees of Sherborne and Ramsbury, both poorly endowed, were reunited and in 1070 became the see of Salisbury. Feast: 25 March.