

The Apostle

The Monthly Magazine of St Aidan's Orthodox Church,
Henderson Street, Levenshulme, Manchester M19 2JX

Called to Serve and a Vision for Mission



Diverse Callings and Ministries

On Sunday 24th November, our bishop, His Eminence Metropolitan Silouan, ordained Simon Aradom and Edward Bennigsen as Subdeacons together with Daniel Polson and Aaron Malloy as

Readers. The subdiaconate and the reader ministries are examples of so-called minor orders – which is more than a little misleading as no vocation or ministry should be called (by way of comparison with the “major” orders of bishop, priest and deacon) “minor”. All of us have a ministerial calling from God to be agents of His Kingdom and His witnesses to the Gospel of Christ. Some subdeacons and some readers will eventually be ordained deacons, and in turn, some of those will be ordained to the priesthood. A very small minority of those priests called to celibacy (most priests in Orthodoxy are married) will be ordained or consecrated bishops.

Qualifications to Serve

Underpinning all these ministries, both minor and major, are certain universal qualifications that must be in place before ordination – before, that is, we even begin to assess vocations and measure the support

of the people together with the candidate's spiritual father. These qualifications, set down in the New Testament for a bishop but applying equally to all ministries, are preserved for us in 1 Timothy 3:1-13. To summarise the teaching in this part of St Paul's letter, we note that a bishop (or any minister) must:-

... *"be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome and no lover of money."* (verse 3)

... *"manage his own household well" including raising his children to be respectful and obedient.* (verses 4 to 5)

... *"not be a recent convert."* (verse 6)

... *"be well thought of by outsiders" [outside, that is, to the Church].* (verse 7)

In verses 8 to 13, in addressing deacons and "the women" the following additional qualifications are cited. Insofar as bishops and priests must first qualify as deacons, these conditions also apply to them. Such persons must:-

... *"be serious, not 'double-tongued'"* (verse 8)

... *"hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."* (verse 9)

... *"be tested ... and blameless"*

(verse 10)

... *not slanderous and remain faithful*

(verse 11)

With these qualifications in mind, no sane, sober and humble person can expect to be ordained just because he wants to serve or that he feels called. The people of God, with their priest and deacons, will recognise these qualities in a man while allowing for the fact that no one can be blameless before the Lord. The bishop, as advised by his officers, will also seek out these strengths and weaknesses by his own investigation – including seeking the approval of the person's spiritual father. When all of these conditions have been satisfied then, and only then, will the candidate for ordination have the "axios" (declaration of worthiness) of the Church, both in the parish, the community and with the bishop's blessing and decision.

A Vision for Mission

Having surveyed some of the basic principles in "callings to serve" we turn to the question of why these callings are so important for the Church and this concerns "a vision for mission."

We do not need young and older men to step forward for ministry just to maintain what we have but

rather to develop what we do not yet have in different places. Jesus said: "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38). We can never relax, sit back on our heels and think that everything is acceptable just because our parish priest has a successor and we have a happy community grounded in Christ. God is calling us always to move beyond what we already have so that more and more people may hear the Gospel and become Christians. By the Holy Spirit we must always be "growing the Church."

Manchester is the second largest city in the UK after London with a population just under 2.8 million. That there should be only five Orthodox parishes and one mission for such a huge city as this, four of which arguably concentrate mainly on ministering to one specific ethnicity is grossly inadequate, mindful of the fact that Orthodoxy has had a presence here since 1843, some 181 years. The only way this is going to change in order to comply with Christ's explicit instruction to evangelise the whole world is for each Orthodox community to pray and plan for setting up new missions all over the

city and, of course, to have these served by competent and holy priests.

We are not responsible for what others could and should do but we are responsible for playing our own part in this goal of mission to the peoples of this great city. A first step has been made in setting up a new mission to serve all points north and dedicated to St Chad, near Heywood. Eventually this mission will become a separate parish and have its own parish priest. This is our vision for mission for the whole of Greater Manchester and will last long after I am dead and gone. This is why we also have a vision for the recruitment and training of SEVERAL deacons, most of whom will eventually be ordained priests.

I am intending to gather together a fellowship of a number of young and older men who will form the nucleus of such an expanding ministry and mission well into the future. These mission initiatives will require a full-bodied ministry of both people and clergy serving as preachers, teachers, singers, servants and sacramental ministers. Will you pray and serve in this great endeavour for God?

- Father Gregory

The Full Armour Of God

More Than A Vision

Orthodox Apologetics



Detractors of Paul argue that his encounter with Christ was merely a “vision,” unlike the lived experiences of the other apostles. According to this view, a vision lacks the substance of direct, personal contact, making it less credible and suggesting that Paul’s apostleship is secondary. However, powerful affirmations from Paul himself and early Church Fathers defend the authenticity of his encounter as a genuine, authoritative revelation of the risen Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Paul recounts his encounter with the risen Christ alongside appearances

to Peter, James, and the other apostles: “Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” Paul does not imply his experience was lesser; rather, he claims equal authority, aligning himself with those who witnessed the resurrected Jesus.

In Galatians 1:18 and 2:1-10, Paul explains how he met Peter and James three years after his conversion, followed later by a visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus. During this visit, Paul presented his gospel to the Gentiles to ensure it aligned with the apostles’ teaching. He writes that they “gave [him] the right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9), affirming his calling and ministry as legitimate. This acceptance by Peter, James, and John validated Paul’s apostleship and the authenticity of his encounter.

The early Church Fathers provide valuable insights into how Paul’s encounter was defended as genuine. Irenaeus (c. 130–202), in *Against Heresies*, affirms that Paul’s apostleship came directly from



Christ: “For even Paul himself, after the Lord had spoken to him from heaven, and had placed him among the apostles, whom he himself had been persecuting, did afterwards write, that he had received not from men, but from Christ Himself, the gospel which he preached” (Book III, Chapter 13). Here, Irenaeus emphasises that Paul’s witness shares the same divine authority as the other apostles.

John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) similarly upheld Paul’s experience as a revelation of Christ’s glory. In *Homilies on the Epistle to the Galatians*, he writes: “The Lord’s appearance to Paul is a great proof of His resurrection. As Paul

stated, ‘And last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me’ (1 Cor. 15:8). This was no mental vision but a true sight of His glory, befitting an apostle.” Chrysostom’s perspective confirms that Paul’s calling was accepted as real and divinely sanctioned as the experiences of Peter, James, and John.

In conclusion, Paul’s writings affirm that his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus was as genuine and authoritative as those of the apostles who saw Jesus in His resurrected body. His visits to Jerusalem further reveal that the original apostles accepted his calling, endorsing his ministry among the Gentiles. Additionally, Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus and John Chrysostom, confirm Paul’s encounter as a full, authentic calling—a true revelation of Christ’s glory, equal to the witness of those who walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry.

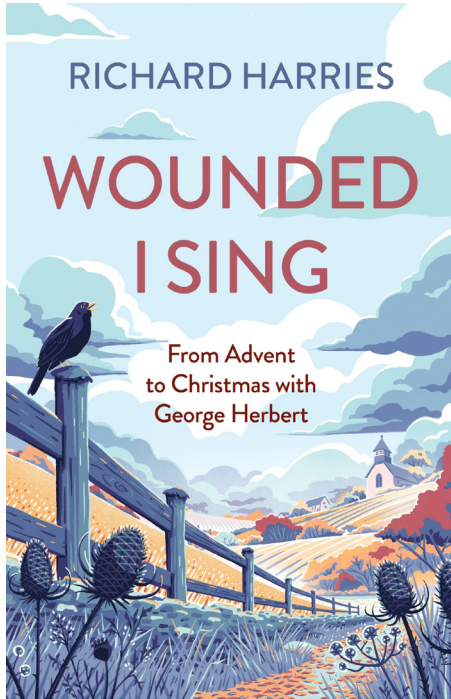
- Reader Daniel



Book Review

Wounded I Sing: From Advent To Christmas

With the Poet George Herbert



This book contains 30 of George Herbert's (1593-1633) poems that seek to draw us closer to God. Although it has been edited to cover Advent, it is suitable for reading in any season of the Church Year shouting "out to God for some repair, forgiveness or answer, exploring the ups and downs of our own faith journeys, and helping the modern mind to connect with themes, such as sin, judgement and

woundedness" [front page].

The editor, Richard Harries, points out that for George Herbert, "the great conflict" is within himself, because Herbert is "perpetually conscious of his sinfulness." Herbert's "struggle about total commitment to God through ordination was the crisis in Herbert's life that is reflected in one way or another in much of his poetry [p. 19].... What was distressing to Herbert was that, being self-aware, he found he had not totally changed in the way he wanted" [p. 21]. Like Herbert, we each have to learn that "total submission to God ... [with or without ordination] is a process, not a once-and-for-all act" [pp. 22; pp.37-39]. "The Christian reality is that God is with us all the time, and indeed may be more intensely present in what we experience as darkness" [p. 47].

For Herbert, "the divine generosity of the Eucharist was to be lived out in the hospitality of his household" [p. 63]. The poem, "The Call" [p. 67] makes it clear that "true happiness ... lies in rejoicing

in the reality of love [of God] and seeking to live out that love in our relationship with others' [p. 70]:
'Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:/
Such a Joy, as none can move:
Such a Love, as none can par: Such
a Heart, as joys in love.'"

Herbert's poem on Psalm 23 (22 in the Septuagint) opens with the conviction: "The God of love my shepherd is,/ And He that doth me feed:/ While He is mine, and I am His,/ What can I want or need?/ He leads me to the tender grass,/ Where I both feed and rest;/ Then to the streams that gently passe:/ In both, I have the best./ In this wonderful psalm we have all that is needed for a human existence. In the first two verses God is with us in all our good times. In the third verse he is with us when we stray and in the fourth as we die, assuring us that God is there in these dark times as well. The fifth [and final] verse looks beyond this life and gives us a wonderful hope." This poem "was probably written in the later part of Herbert's life when as a result of severe illness he was conscious of death" [pp. 71-4].

The poem, "Love (2)" begins: "Immortal Heat, O let Thy greater flame/ Attract the lesser to it: let those fires,/ Which shall consume

the world, first make it tame/ And kindle in our hearts such true desires,/ As may consume our lusts, and make Thee way/ Then shall our hearts pant Thee, then shall our brain/All her invention on Thine altar lay,/ And there in hymns send back Thy fire again.'" [p. 111]. In this poem "this love is 'Immortal heat.' Dante, before Herbert, and T. S. Eliot after him, use flame as a central image, a flame which is at once the burning pain of self-knowledge and the flame of divine love. This is the flaming light in which we both know ourselves and are rescued from ourselves. So the flame in the first five lines of Herbert's poem burns up our lusts, tames our heats and kindles an answering flame of love in us which is drawn to the divine flame."

- **Father Emmanuel**



News from the Parish

The 2024 visit of our bishop, Sayedna Silouan to St Aidan's

On the weekend of 23rd / 24th November, our bishop, Sayedna Silouan visited the parish and ordained Edward Bennigsen and Simon Aradom Subdeacons together with Daniel Polson and Aaron Malloy Readers. The bishop also gave the faculty to Father Daniel to hear confessions. After the Liturgy we had a beautiful fasting meal made possible by the usual generosity of those many church members who every weekend bring food to share.

After the meal we met in a combined Open General Meeting and Parish Council with the bishop in attendance. We made important decisions on increasing the building's capacity for our growing (increasingly young) community and adopting a fairer and more accurate calculation of clergy salaries. The meeting concluded with the bishop's blessing after a wonderful weekend shared with him.

- Father Gregory



News from the Parish

Some photos from the visit of Bishop Silouan - 24/11/2024





News from the Parish

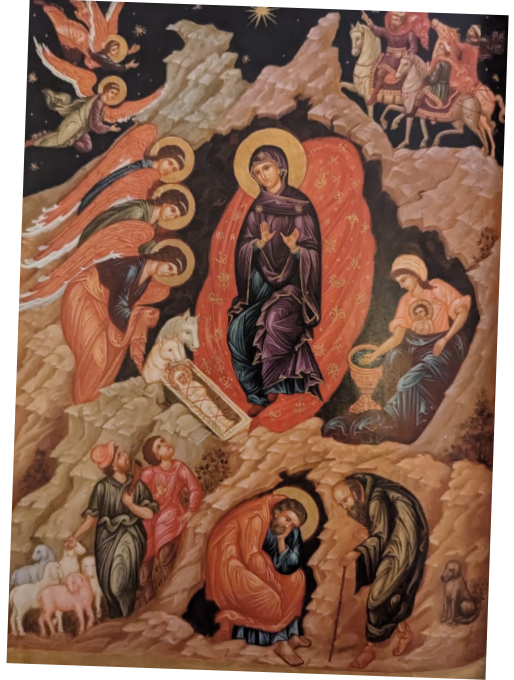
Services over Christmas 2024

Christmas Eve at 2.30pm

Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St Basil

Christmas Day at 10am

the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom



let all mortal flesh keep silence

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly-minded,
For with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand.*

*King of kings, yet born of Mary,
As of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,
In the body and the blood;
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heav'nly food.*

*Rank on rank the host of heaven
Spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the Light of light descendeth
From the realms of endless day,
That the pow'rs of hell may vanish
As the darkness clears away.*

*At His feet the six-winged seraph,
Cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence,
As with ceaseless voice they cry:
"Alleluia, Alleluia,
Alleluia, Lord Most High!"*

Pilgrimage to St Elisabeth's Parish, Wallasey

To See The Myrrh-Streaming 'Hawaiian'-Iveron Icon of the Theotokos

On the evening of 11 November 2024, the myrrh-streaming Hawaiian-Iveron icon of the Theotokos visited the Church of St Elizabeth in Wallasey near Liverpool. A number of the congregation from St Aidan's (including myself) took the opportunity to go and venerate the icon in what proved to be a deeply blessed evening.

We arrived at St Elizabeth's which quickly filled up. After a short while the place was packed. It was great to see the number of Orthodox Christians who had flocked to see and venerate this miraculous icon.

A vesperal service was held and serviced beautifully by the parish's Russian Orthodox choir. As well as lay parishioners, the service was attended by monastics and clergy from around the North West including our own Father Emmanuel Kahn.

The icon itself weeps Myrrh, (a scented oil) and has been doing so since 2007. There have been reports of healing miracles since this time. The icon's guardian, **Deacon Nectarios Yangson** addressed the crowd and shared some of his thoughts, experiences and what it meant to him to witness



Deacon Nectarios with the icon

the icon's wonderful blessings as this sacred and holy object has had such a positive impact on those who come to witness it in faith.

On a personal level it was a great blessing to witness this first hand. As I venerated the icon I could smell the scent of Myrrh. Even though we were among the last to venerate it, there was still enough oil to collect some on a cotton wool ball. The fabric on the outside of the icon was saturated in oil. The icon had previously produced enough myrrh for the Priests to use to anoint everyone present.

- John Bartholomew