

The Apostle

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

Living Water

In our service books the celebration of the Theophany has a subtitle, The Great Blessing of the Waters, which reflects the powerful reference of its sacramental dimension. The font which we use for the submersion of neophytes in baptism is filled with water. Together with prayers and readings the waters are blessed using the ancient consecratory prayer of St Sophronius of Jerusalem. The blessed water is then sprinkled on the faithful and given in bottles for us to take home where it is used in family blessings. The clergy then spend most of January visiting parishioners' homes and blessing them with this holy water.

We all know how important water is in sustaining life. It is a stable compound which facilitates all sorts of chemical reactions that are essential to life processes, health and well-being. In this, water is not only a symbol of life but also its

engine. Water, however, can also be destructive, typically of course by drowning. We all understand the positive aspects of water but we may struggle to find anything good in its negative aspects.

This becomes clearer when we consider what Christian baptism actually achieves. Here, the negative aspect of water becomes positive. Our sins, by grace and through also our repentance and faith, are drowned in the waters of the font but when we are raised up from our submersion in the waters it is to new life in Christ and by the power of His Resurrection. This, after all, is why we cast off our regular clothing, representing the old life, and take for our nakedness the transformative and glorious dazzling white apparel of the righteousness of Christ our God.

In this clothing, we are also anointed with the Holy Spirit from the Father; the descending Dove



empowering our lives for God's service. No baptism in water is therefore complete without baptism in the Holy Spirit, and in the Church these component liturgical events of baptism and chrismation are never separated (as they have been in the heterodox late Christian west).

When we Orthodox Christians partake of the blessed holy waters of Theophany, we are called to reproduce within ourselves the saving aspects of baptism that once and for all connect us to the death and resurrection of Christ. There is, nonetheless, much more to Theophany than even this. In Orthodox Christianity the salvation of Christ extends through us to the whole Cosmos. All Christians are now called to fulfil their original vocation to be God's priests in the created order. Wherever then there is water in Creation it may be blessed and in this blessing the whole of Creation can be renewed and regenerated in Christ. Death is no more, not only for the baptised Christian, but also for Creation itself. The blessing of the waters, whether in fonts, streams, rivers, lakes, seas, or even in mighty oceans is a powerful divine transformation.

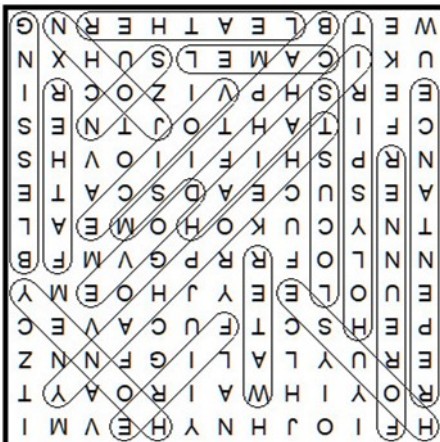
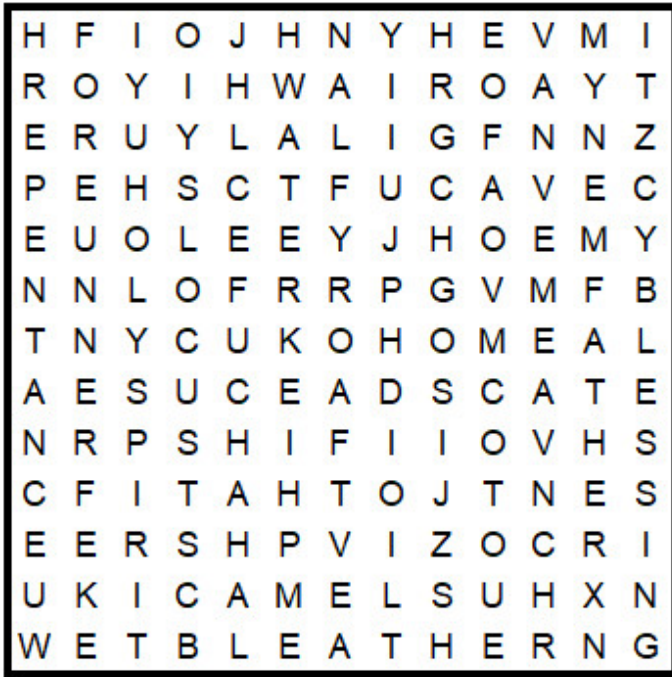
If we have the faith to see this significance of Theophany and rise to the challenge, then all of us can exercise our royal priesthood in Christ for the whole of the Cosmos. The greening of Creation by God and ourselves is not some sort of trendy ecological add-on to the Gospel; it is of the very essence of the Gospel itself. It is not, therefore, just us who should be baptised and live in and through that baptism, but also the very Creation itself.

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptised in the Jordan the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bore witness unto Thee, calling Thee his Beloved Son. And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of his Word. O Christ our God, who hast revealed Thyself and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee (Troparion).

Today Thou hast appeared to the universe, and Thy Light, O Lord, has shone on us, who with understanding praise Thee: Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, O Light Unapproachable! (Kontakion).

- Fr Gregory

Puzzles Page - Theophany word search



Book Review

We Shall See Him as He Is

by St Sophrony Sakharov



In this remarkable book, Archimandrite Sophrony, who lived from 1896 to 1993, expresses the hope that his “spiritual autobiography will help others to interpret their own ordeals” [p. 7]. In Chapter 1, “The Grace of the Mindfulness of Death,” his awareness of “war, disease and like calamities” and the inevitability of his own death causes him “unbearable suffering,” but then “the thought suddenly occurred to me that if man is capable of such profound suffering, he is by his nature a noble creature” [pp.12-13]. At first, he turned to painting and the arts and “never said a word to anyone about my ‘parallel life in

the Spirit” [p. 15]. However, then he is befriended by St Silouan and discovers that “all my previous experience had prepared me to fathom his teaching” about the Lord [p. 18]. Insights follow on the fear of God [Chapter 2], repentance [Chapter 3], spiritual mourning [chapter 4], and “the bliss of knowing the way” [Chapter 6] before a summary of “the Life of our Spirit” [Chapter 7]. There he concludes that “authentically Christian life means living ‘in spirit and in truth,’” as set out in the Gospel of John, chapter 4, verses 23 and 24, “and so is practicable anywhere, at any time, in any historical epoch” [p. 95].

Archimandrite Sophrony was raised to the glory of sainthood by the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the 26th of November 1987 [p. 149]. St Sophrony had experienced that: “The Gospel precepts contain God’s revelation of Himself. The more deeply we enter into their spirit, the more specific will be our vision of God. And when these commandments, by His good providence, come to be the one and only principle of our whole being, both temporal and eternal, then we too ‘shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He Is.’ [1 John 3:2].”

- Father Emmanuel

Pilgrimage to St Chad's Cathedral

Lichfield

With our new mission parish in Heywood dedicated to our holy Father Chad very much in the forefront of our minds, I thought it would be useful to learn more about Chad aka "Bishop in these parts" Our holy Father Chad was born at the end of the sixth century in Northumberland. He was a disciple of St. Aidan of Lindisfarne. After a period in Ireland spent in asceticism, he was appointed Abbot of Lastingham in Yorkshire in succession to his brother, St. Cedd. A full account of St Chad's labours and life can be found at this link.

St Chad | Parish

Chad was selected to be bishop of the Mercians by their king Oswy with the blessing of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore, the patron of our Archdiocese, established his episcopal see in the town of Lichfield [i.e. 'field of the dead', so called because one thousand Christians, including the Priest Amphibalus, were martyred there during the Roman persecutions]. Chad died and was buried at Lichfield and where the succeeding bishops of the province have their See to this day.

The Cathedral is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Chad. It is still the seat of the bishop of Lichfield and the principal church of the diocese of Lichfield. There are daily services at the cathedral, which has been designated a grade I listed building.

The diocese of Mercia was created in 656, and a cathedral was present on this site at the time of Saint Chad, c. 669-672. Chad of Mercia was the first bishop of Lichfield and his relics were housed at the cathedral until the English Reformation, 1538.

The cathedral was built between early 13th century and c.1320 in the Decorated Gothic style. The work probably began with the central tower and choir at the east end and progressed west through the transepts, chapter house, nave, and south-west tower. This lady chapel, central tower, south-east tower, and three spires followed. During the English Civil War, the cathedral compound was besieged three times; the church was severely damaged, losing a spire, much of its roof, all of its medieval glass and many monuments.

The building was extensively restored after the Civil War under bishop John Hacket and several times in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of the details of the building date from the restorations undertaken by the renowned architect Sir George Gilbert Scott, who is known as the architect of the Midland Hotel at London's St Pancras Station. The drive to Lichfield from the Stockport area is about 1hr 40mins via Buxton. The rail journey time to Lichfield City Station is also 1hr 40 away from Stockport Station and then a 10-minute walk from the Cathedral.

I've been to a few of the great English cathedrals but there is something special about Lichfield. Entry is by a voluntary donation.

There are always interesting windows and tombs to see in a cathedral. During our visit we saw the Christmas Tree Festival sponsored by local businesses and community groups.



and a Nativity scene, but we had come to visit the burial place of St. Chad.



The modern altar consecrated in November 2022 is over a tomb-like cabinet in which a relic of the saint is kept. This relic came from the Catholic cathedral of St. Chad in Birmingham. I asked the guide if the rest of the relics would be returned to Lichfield. Apparently it took years to try and get a small bone back with permission having to be obtained from the Pope in Rome, so I think that's a NO..

The Cathedral website states "The new Shrine of St Chad at Lichfield Cathedral seeks to go back to the original purpose of Shrines -

as a reminder that a godly man has brought the Christian faith to this place”.



On the back of the altar is the word “Disciple” and the following inscription.

“Christ is the morning star, who when the night of this world is past, brings to His saints the promise of the light of life and opens everlasting day”

The ethos of this cathedral is one dedicated to God. That might sound odd but I don’t get that at some of the other English cathedrals I visit, who to ensure income depend on worldly initiatives such as gin festivals, rock concerts or posh jumble sales. The cathedral has many icons,

specially written for the community by the Bethlehem Icon School.

The Very Revd Adrian Dorber, Dean of Lichfield says: “This is a really exciting and creative project. The Bethlehem Icon Centre is training young Palestinian artists in a form of Christian art that first began in the Holy Land. Recently their training has been accredited by the Prince of Wales’ School of Traditional Arts and Skills. Our commission benefits the Bethlehem Centre by providing an important UK venue for its work but it links us in Lichfield with an unbroken form of Christian art that speaks engagingly and beautifully of the Christian Story.

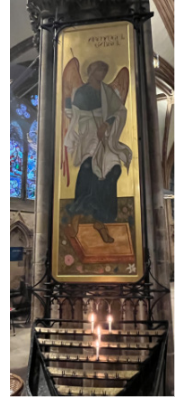
“As a place of pilgrimage and worship, I believe these icons will help all our Cathedral visitors to pray and get a glimpse of God’s generous love: his invitation to align our lives with his. We also hope that by having the staff and students in Lichfield for the whole summer, local people can get to hear of the struggles people in Bethlehem face but also learn much from the students’ faith and resilience.”

There are many icons in the cathedral, one of which we have in our own church. There is no avoiding this icon!

At the end of every visit is a shop of course, but again unlike many other cathedrals, it's not full of tat but guess what... more icons.

“Pray we now to the undivided Trinity, that we may be helped with the prayers of this most holy man, Saint Chad, and that we may earn for ourselves to come to the fellowship of holy bishops and blessed spirits, through the forgiveness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, world without end.”
The Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of Saint Chad of Lichfield on March 2.

- Chris Tsielepi



Recipe - Non Fasting

Easy Bacon and Egg Muffins



Here we have a very easy recipe you can prepare as a breakfast or a snack, or for the Sunday bring and share lunch:

Easy bacon and egg muffins

Makes 14 muffins

The muffins taste equally good hot from the oven or cold.

To prepare them you need:

1 pack of smoked streaky bacon.

(The pack I used consisted of 14 strips. Enough for 7 muffins)

20ml milk

5 eggs

10g feta

30g cheddar

10g parmezan

Preheat the oven to 200 C fan/180 C gas mark 6.

Lightly grease 7 holes of the muffin tray. Fold the bacon strips in half and place them, criss-crossed, in the muffin holes.



Crack the eggs in a bowl and whisk them together with the milk.

Add the cheeses and after mixing well pour equal amount of the mix into the muffin's holes on the top of the bacon.

Bake them for 15-20 min.

Voila!

- Kameliya Konstantinova



C.S. Lewis - A list of some of his popular works.

C.S. Lewis is hugely popular author among Christians. Below are a list of some of his books that are well worth a read. Check the library and book store in Church.

1. Mere Christianity

Summary: A seminal work of Christian apologetics, this book is based on radio talks given by Lewis during World War II. It explores the essence of Christian belief, morality, and theology in an accessible way, arguing for the rationality of Christianity.

2. The Great Divorce

Summary: A thought-provoking allegory about a bus ride from hell to heaven. It examines the choices that lead to either eternal joy or separation from God, offering profound reflections on salvation.

3. The Chronicles of Narnia

(Series) Summary: This seven-book series is an allegorical fantasy that introduces Christian themes like sacrifice, redemption, and resurrection through the adventures of children in the magical land of Narnia. Notable books include *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and *The Last Battle*.

4. Surprised by Joy

Summary: An autobiographical account of Lewis's early life and his journey from atheism to Christianity, revealing his intellectual and spiritual transformation.

5. The Problem of Pain

Summary: This book tackles one of the most challenging questions of faith: Why does a loving God allow suffering? Lewis combines logic and compassion in his exploration of theodicy.

6. A Grief Observed

Summary: A deeply personal reflection on grief and faith, written after the death of Lewis's wife, Joy Davidman. It is a raw and honest exploration of loss and God's presence in suffering.

7. Miracles

Summary: Lewis defends the possibility of miracles in a world governed by natural laws, providing a compelling case for the supernatural intervention of God in human history.

8. The Four Loves

Summary: An exploration of the four

types of love—affection, friendship, eros, and charity—and their interrelations, with a focus on how they reflect God’s love.

10. The Weight of Glory

Summary: A collection of sermons and essays, including the titular sermon, which discusses the eternal significance of human actions and the glory awaiting believers.

11. Till We Have Faces

Summary: A reimagining of the Cupid and Psyche myth, this novel explores themes of love, faith, and divine interaction, making it one of Lewis’s most profound works.

12. Out of the Silent Planet (Space Trilogy Book 1)

Summary: The first book in Lewis’s science fiction series, this novel allegorically portrays the cosmic struggle between good and evil, reflecting Christian theology.

13. Perelandra

(Space Trilogy Book 2)

Summary: This second installment in the Space Trilogy is a vivid retelling of the Fall, set on a newly created planet and showcasing themes of temptation and obedience.

14. That Hideous Strength

(Space Trilogy Book 3)

Summary: The final book in the trilogy addresses the corruption of power and the clash between modernity and spirituality, with Christian undertones of redemption and grace.

15. The Abolition of Man

Summary: A philosophical work addressing the dangers of moral relativism and the loss of objective values, emphasizing the necessity of a universal moral law.

16. The Pilgrim’s Regress

Summary: An allegorical account of Lewis’s own spiritual journey, this book reflects the Christian pilgrimage toward truth and grace, modeled after *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

17. Present Concerns

Summary: A collection of Lewis’s essays on societal, moral, and political issues, written from a distinctly Christian perspective.

