

From a sermon by Saint John Damascene, bishop

(Orat. 6, in Nativitatem B. Mariae V., 2. 4. 5. 6: PG 96, 663. 667. 670)

BY THEIR FRUITS YOU WILL KNOW THEM

Ann was to be the mother of the Virgin Mother of God, and hence nature did not dare to anticipate the flowering of grace. Thus nature remained sterile, until grace produced its fruit. For she who was to be born had to be a first-born daughter, since she would be the mother of the first-born of all creation, *in whom all things are held together.*

Joachim and Ann, how blessed a couple! All creation is indebted to you. For at your hands the Creator was offered a gift excelling all other gifts: a chaste mother, who alone was worthy of him.

And so rejoice, Ann, that you were sterile and have not borne children; break forth into shouts, you who have not given birth. Rejoice, Joachim, because from your daughter a child is born for us, a son is given us, whose name is Messenger of great counsel and universal salvation, mighty God. For this child is God.

Joachim and Ann, how blessed and spotless a couple! You will be known by the fruit you have borne, as the Lord says: *By their fruits you will know them.* The conduct of your life pleased God and was worthy of your daughter. For by the chaste and holy life you led together, you have fashioned a jewel of virginity: she who remained a virgin before, during and after giving birth. She alone for all time would maintain her virginity in mind and soul as well as in body.

Joachim and Ann, how chaste a couple! While safeguarding the chastity prescribed by the law of nature, you achieved with God's help something which transcends nature in giving the world the Virgin Mother of God as your daughter. While leading a devout and holy life in your human nature, you gave birth to a daughter nobler than the angels, whose queen she now is. Girl of utter beauty and delight, daughter of Adam and mother of God, blessed the loins and blessed the womb from which you come! Blessed the arms that carried you, and blessed your parents' lips, which you were allowed to cover with chaste kisses, ever maintaining your virginity. *Rejoice in God, all the earth. Sing, exult and sing hymns.* Raise your voice, raise it and be not afraid.



Valerie

Antiochian Orthodox

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COMMUNITY PROGRAMME & NEWSLETTER

July 2024



TROPARIUM OF ANN

(Tone 4)

O divinely-wise Ann, you carried in your womb the pure Mother of God, who gave birth to the Life. Wherefore, you now have been carried up joyfully to the inheritance of heaven, to the abode of those who rejoice in glory. O blessed one, obtain the forgiveness of sins for those who honor you with fervor.

SERVICES IN JULY 2024

(In the Parish Church unless otherwise stated)

BRITISH ORTHODOX SAINTS
COMMEMORATED
IN JULY.

See selected lives of Saints on the back page.

- 01 Cewydd, Hermit
- 02 Swithin, Bishop of Winchester, Wonderworker
- 05 Modwenna of Burton, anchoress
Modwenna of Whitby
- 06 Saxburgh, Abbess of Ely
- 07 Boswell, Abbot of Melrose
Ethelburgh of Faremoutiers, Abbess
Hedda, Bishop of Winchester
Willibald, Bishop and Missionary
- 08 Edgar the Peaceful, King of England
Grimbald, Monk
Urith of Chittlehampton, Virgin-Martyr
- 09 Everild, Abbess of Everingham
- 11 Amabilis, Virgin*
Thurketyl, Abbot of Crowland
- 13 Mildred, Abbess of Minster-in-Thanel
- 14 Deusdedit, Archbishop of Canterbury
Marchelm, Missionary*
- 15 Edith, Abbess of Polesworth
- 16 Plechelm, Missionary and Bishop
- 17 Kenelm, Martyr
- 18 Edburgh, Virgin
- 20 Arild of Gloucestershire, Virgin-Martyr
Etheldwitha of Winchester, Widow
- 24 Christiana, Virgin*
- 24 Lewina, Virgin-Martyr
Wulfhad and Ruffin, Martyrs
- 28 Ardwin, Gerald, Fulk and Bernard, Confessors*
- 30 Ermengyth of Thanet, Virgin
Tatwine, Archbishop of Canterbury
- 31 Joseph of Arimathea
Neot, Hermit

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 Fursey.

Where fore 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.



Sat July 6 th	Vespers 4pm. St Sexburga of Ely
Sun July 7 th	2 nd Sunday after Pentecost All the Saints of Britain Divine Liturgy 9:30am.
Thurs July 11 th	Great Martyr Euphemia the All Praised. TYPKIA 9am. St Sophany of Essex.
Sat July 13 th	Synaxis of Angel Gabriel Vespers 4pm.
Sun July 14 th	3 rd Sunday after Pentecost The Fourth Ecumenical Council. 451 Divine Liturgy 9:30am.
Fri July 19 th	Vespers 4pm of Glorious Prophet Elijah 9 th BC.
Sat July 20 th	Vespers 4pm.
Sun July 21 st	4 th Sunday after Pentecost (St Mary Magdalene Myrrh Bearer) Divine Liturgy 9:30am.
Wed July 24 th	Dormition of the Righteous Anna Mother of the Holy Theotokos Vespertal Liturgy 7pm (Fast from 1pm).
Sat July 27 th	Vespers 4pm Great Martyr & Healer Panteleimon.
Sun July 28 th	5 th Sunday after Pentecost Saint Samson, Bishop of Dolin Brittany 565.

Daily Services in St Fursey's Chapel (Neville Road).

These are normally 3rd hour with reading from the Fathers, Monday & Friday (at the Parish Church on Tuesday and Thursday). Vespers daily at 4pm. Local Readers are very welcome but please ring 01692 581849 to make sure it is still on.

Community News & Notices

Open Day & Coffee Morning Report June 7th

The weather was very kind to us on Friday June 7th, so we were able to have the stalls on the lawns outside the church. Many thanks to all those who helped and supported us. We raised £311 on the day and had £140 in cheques in the post on the same day. The best ever! We also were able to have some interesting talks with visitors. Our next Open Day & Coffee Morning will be Friday September 6th.

Thursday Bible Study

This has resumed and we are studying the Book of Revelation using the Orthodox Study Bible and its excellent commentary.

Some New Faces

In recent months we have been blessed with some new arrivals: Mark Samuel, and Michael and his family Georgina, Miles, Nicholas, and baby Charlotte. See some words from Samuel on separate page.

SEPTEMBER INTRODUCTORY TALKS

It has become our custom to have four introductory talks on Thursday evening in September. These will be on Thursday September 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th. More details next month.

October Pilgrimage to Burgh Castle

This is only general discussion at, the moment, details later, to celebrate the 26th founding of St Fursey's Orthodox Community.

A Talk on Icons

St Fursey's had a group of visitors on June 17th from the Cell of the Mother of God of Walsingham (mainly Anglo-Catholic ladies) with their priest Fr Paul and after the talk we had tea and cakes and much discussion! We had a full church for Vespers at 4pm; so we thank God for a very pleasant afternoon.

Every Blessing to our Readers

Father Stephen - Telephone No: 01692 581849.

Gift Aid Pledge 2024 –

The UK Government has a scheme of Gift Aid, meaning that any amount donated to our church by anyone who pays tax, the government will top it up with 25% of the donation. So, it would be most beneficial that, if you are a taxpayer, when you make donations to St Fursey's Church, including money to pay for an item of goods, is to sign up for Gift Aid.

There are declaration forms for you to fill in at the entrance porch of the church. Unless the church has your signed declaration, we are unable to claim Gift Aid from your donations. This does make a huge difference to our income. In order that the church knows where each donation has come from, there are yellow envelopes available inside the church building for you to put the donations in. All that is required then is for you to fill in the details on the outside of the envelope and then simply either put the envelope into the donation box in the church or give the envelope to Fr. Stephen. Another method of giving, which is already done by many of our church members, is for you to set up a Bank Standing Order. If you require further information, please see Fr. Stephen.

My name is Samuel, I am twenty nine years old and have been a stonemason for roughly nine or ten of those years.

When at first I received the notion of working stone for the rest of my life I was bored, restless and more than a little afraid. The image in my mind of spending the majority of my waking hours in hard physical and mental labour, grinding myself to dust for seemingly little respect or reward was a frightening prospect. I had no plans at the time but certainly, I said to myself, I would eventually have thought of some, and they would have certainly been better and more inspiring.

Self-Control

Self-control is also listed by the Apostle Paul as a “fruit of the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:22) This virtue is one which is not often easily attained because people forget that, like patience, it is a grace of God and they must seek it from the Lord. Instead they think that it can come from human effort and will power alone.

Self-control is one of the main characteristics of God and is one of the main gifts to man as created in God’s image. According to the saints, self-control is one of the main elements of the divine image in man, co-extensive with the gift of freedom which is often explained as the essential and basic element of man’s likeness to his Creator. When one is perfectly free by the grace of God — “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17) — there is also perfect control over oneself.

Man loses his self-control when he sells himself to sin and becomes a slave to the corruption of his fleshly passions. Such a man has been characterized well in the second letter of Saint Peter.

... those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority ... bold and willful ... irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed, reviling in matters of which they are ignorant ... They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation ... They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin ... They have hearts trained in greed ... They have gone astray ... These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm ... For, uttering loud boasts of folly, they entice with licentious passions of the flesh men who have barely escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved. (2 Peter 10-19)

The man without self-control is enslaved. He is the captive of sin, the willing instrument of carnal passions, the victim of all foolishness and evil. He is bound in his mind and heart by “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.” (1 John 1:17) He is a “child of the devil” (John 8:44, Acts 13:10, 1 John 3:10) and possesses a “carnal mind.” (Romans 8:7)

... following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we also once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of the body ... (Ephesians 2:3-4, Romans 1:18-32)

Self-control, according to the spiritual tradition of the Church, is the spiritual mastery over the lusts of the mind and the flesh. It is often called “passionlessness” by the spiritual masters. Passionlessness (apatheia) does not mean the destruction of the natural drives and desires of the body and soul, such as the need for sleep, food and drink; or the emotions such as spiritual desire, zeal, excitement, joy, awe, sorrow or fear. It means rather the control of the feelings that are normal, natural and healthy, and the mortification of the feelings that are wicked and evil.

Evil is to be seen, not in the nature of creatures, but in their wrong and irrational movements.

Passionlessness is a peaceful state of the soul in which it is not readily moved to evil.

In the soul are its spiritual powers. In the body are its senses and members. Around the person are food, possessions, money, etc. A right or wrong use of things, and the resulting effects show us as being either virtuous or sinful.

The scriptures ... do not forbid eating or bearing children or having money and spending it rightly, but they forbid gluttony, fornication, and so on.

They do not even forbid us to think about such things ... but only forbid us to think of them with passion and lust.

When the mind is not the master, the senses hold sway, and as a rule the senses are mixed with the power of sin which, through pleasure, leads the soul to pity the flesh ... As a result, it undertakes, as if it were natural to do so, a passionate and lustful and pleasure-loving care of the flesh and leads man away from the truly natural life, urging him to be for himself the instigator of evil ...

Evil for a rational soul is to forget its natural good, thanks to a passionate attitude to the flesh and the world. When the mind becomes the master, it abolishes such an attitude ... rightly interpreting the origin and nature of the world and the flesh ...

As the mind, keeping passion in its power, makes the senses the instruments of virtue, so the passions, captivating the mind, move the senses to sin. It is necessary to see how the soul should keep a suitable mode of action by using for virtues what was formerly used for sin.

A soul moves rationally when its desiring power has acquired self-mastery, its excitable power strives after love ... and its mental power abides in God by prayer and spiritual contemplation. (Saint Maximus the Confessor, 7th c.)

Thus it is only communion with God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, that gives the power of self-control to the rational creature of God.

Faithfulness

According to the scriptures, one of the main characteristics of God is His absolute faithfulness. This virtue in man is also considered to be one of the **"fruits of the Holy Spirit."** (Galatians 5:22)

To be faithful means to be absolutely true to one's word, to be totally loyal in one's devotion, to be completely steadfast and unswerving in one's own calling and vocation. It also means to remain in humble service, in truth and in love, no matter what the conditions or consequences. To be faithful means to be courageous and to be and to do that which one must be and do by God's will, regardless of any rejection by others and in spite of any lack of recognition or appreciation.

God Himself is perfectly faithful. He has made promises and declared covenants, keeping His word no matter what man does. When men are adulterous and faithless, God remains faithful (Cf. Jeremiah 3, Ezekiel 16); for **"the Lord has sworn and will not change His mind."** (Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7:21)

... if we deny Him, He will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful — for He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:12-13)

Christ is faithful to His Father and to His creatures until the end. He does not swerve from His mission but accomplishes all that God the Father has given Him to do. (Cf. John 17:4) According to the book of Revelation, the name of Jesus, the Word of God, is **"Faithful and True"**; He is called **"the faithful witness"** by Saint John. (Revelation 19:11, 1:5)

The spiritual person is the one who is faithful to his calling, fulfilling every good resolution, and bearing fruit patiently with the gifts and talents given by God. The spiritual person is faithful in every little thing — every thought, every word, every deed — **"according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him"** (Romans 12:3), **"according to the measure of Christ's**

gift" which is **"given to each."** (Ephesians 4:7) Such faithfulness is the main teaching in Christ's parable of the talents. The one who faithfully and without fear develops and grows with that which the Lord has provided is the one who hears the voice of the Master.

Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little — faithful in a very little (Luke 19:27); I will set you over much, enter into the joy of your master. (Matthew 25:21)

The main enemies of faithfulness to God and man are pride, covetousness, cowardice, envy and the refusal to serve humbly where one is, with the conditions and gifts which God has provided. Faithlessness is born when one **"thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think"** (Romans 12:3), fears that he cannot do with what God has given, covets his neighbors' talents and gifts, and moves from place to place seeking to be satisfied and filled by the things of this world.

Faithfulness is characterized by stability of body and soul; the utter refusal to move or be moved for any unworthy reason; the complete dedication to what God gives one to do, with the faith, grace and strength that God gives to do it. As it is written in the sayings of the fathers of the desert: **"As a tree cannot bear fruit if it is often transplanted, no more can a monk (or any person) that is often changing his mind and moving from place to place."** The only way to receive the **"crown of life"** is to be **"faithful until death"** in the place where God has put us. (Revelation 2:10) The only way to find joy, wisdom and peace is to be faithful to one's own uniqueness, knowing that each person has his own specific life and vocation from God which no one else has; his own specific mission which no one else can perform. The spiritual person develops his own life in faithfulness, without envy or fear, and so accomplishes and becomes that which God has willed for him before the dawn of creation.

The stone, it turned out, was a deeply interesting, mysterious and inspiring thing. A misshapen lump of portland limestone, not the best bed, a bit shelly, large ungainly oolites. I learned that these limestones were composed of the skeletons of millions of tiny sea creatures, that uncounted micro-organisms had perished in dark ancient seas, their remains drifting to the fathomless depths to be buried, entombed for lengths of time alien to conventional imagination.

I broke this piece, my attempt at a simple tudor ball-flower wasted. The next stone after that was also ruined by clumsy and useless hands. But it was too late, I had learned through touch the right force and direction of chisel and mallet to shape the material without stunning it. I could shape these things how I wished, with the correct touch, the correct attention to detail. With the right knowledge I could take any unobtrusive shape, any sad forgotten stone and make something. My hands became less useless with time and I learned a bit of sense. I was not ground to dust, just a few of the sharp edges rounded off, some flawed waste cut away.

I came to the church a little while later. I had approached Christianity the long way round through varieties of paganism, through Protestant and Catholic. I am not a smart man, and I suspect that I required serious restoration before He was ready to receive me. Church work of course featured prominently in my day to day and I couldn't help but love these places, love what they represented. People are flawed, but the correct use of these magnificent structures is to show our love for our God. These are gifts to him. I longed for religion.

Eventually I was baptised, a small yet affluent ceremony in a converted police station, a little pokey series of chambers richly appointed in Orthodox style, a palace made out of a tiny humble structure. I was raised in a totally secular household, organised religion was anathema. Yet I must emphasise to all reading this, especially anyone sceptical, the intense, immediate, physical sensations I have experienced. Throughout my life I felt my heart was broken, two distinct pieces, damaged and unfulfilled. After my baptism this was no longer so. I felt it, my heart, my soul, physically restored and repaired. A plate or a stone in two pieces suddenly made into one, as though it had never been broken. We can't do that with real stone, there's always a join but this was different. From that day I began to live, really live again, each day feeling more real and alive than it ever had been.

Every day I am ground down still further, but not destroyed. There are very skilled and experienced hands shaping us every day. The finest craftsman there ever was and ever will be has made every single mote of dust by hand, every muscle and fibre and bone worked to exquisite detail to designs drawn up by Him. I have not been broken as yet, only reshaped and remade. Work is still ongoing.

July 25

Feast of the Dormition of Holy Ann,
the Mother of the Theotokos

(GREAT) VESPERS

∞ *At "O Lord, to You I call..."*

FOR ANN

(Tone 1)

6. O faithful, celebrating the memory of the holy and wondrous ancestors of the Lord, Joachim and Ann, with sacred hymns we glorify the compassionate One who has made them fervent intercessors for our salvation.
5. Today, the previously barren and childless one, who gave birth to the first-fruits of our salvation, is transferred from this life to the next. She entreats the Lord to grant remission of sins to those who sing to her with faith.
4. Celebrating the memory of Your just ancestors, O Christ, we sing to You, for today You transferred Ann from this temporal life to the everlasting life in the presence of God. She is the mother who bore the divine and ever-virgin Mother who wondrously gave birth to You without seed.
3. Behold, the radiant solemnity, a feastday for the whole world, the holy and glorious dormition of Ann, the wondrous mother who gave birth to the Mother of Life, the living Ark who contained the uncontainable Word. She delivered us from suffering, bringing us never-ending joy, and grants great mercy to all the faithful.
2. O marvelous wonder! The woman who gloriously gave birth to the Virgin who alone is blessed among women, the source of our Life, passes from this temporal life to the never-ending life. Today, the glorious Ann is lifted up from earth to heaven to exult together with the choirs of Angels; and today we celebrate her sacred feast.
1. Today, in the fervor of the Holy Spirit, all we the faithful celebrate the glorious feast of your holy dormition: behold, you are still with us, granting the grace of healing, consuming all evil spirits around us, and enlightening the hearts of the faithful who sing of your venerable passing, O holy Ann.