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Lord I believe; help my unbelief!

Dear Friends

Our generation—where the Lord has chosen for us to work out our salvation—is one of great challenges. Many in our society believe that science has disproved religion, that religion was merely there to explain the inexplicable, and religions will eventually die out. "God is dead" is their slogan, their mantra.

The subtlety of the Devil is not in an outright lie, these are easy to spot: rather it is in giving us enough truth that we will believe a misdirection. "God is dead" contains some truth, but it has been distorted and disfigured: it is not "God is dead" but rather "God died." God, in his infinite love for each one of us, died. And, not only this, not only did God die but he arose and has brought new life to all who believe in him.

In our confused world, many of faith are tempted by doubt yet many of doubt are tempted by faith. Those who choose atheism over Christianity seem rarely to do so because of facts and data but because they find the narrative presented to be more convincing. Christianity is often presented as irrational, unscientific and redundant in our modern world: there are even some Christians who rejoice in these labels but our Faith is none of these things. Our Faith is centred on Christ who is the incarnate (literally "in flesh") Word of God: Christ is Truth, is Reason, is Life. The seeking of truth—whether *spiritual* truth, *scientific* truth, *philosophical* truth, etc.—has Christ at its goal and does not cause us to fear.

Yes, there are doubts, and we hear of the doubts of a father in this Sunday's Gospel

reading. Although his words were said two thousand years ago they sound contemporary to our world.

At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise.

— Mark 9:17–31

"I believe; help my unbelief!" These can be our words. Lord, take the small measure of faithfulness I have and grow it, nurture it, cultivate it that I may have more faithfulness. In giving the little we have, and offering it to the Lord, he will return it to us that we have more. And when we receive more, we must remember that if we try to hold onto it it will wither, if we offer it back again to the Lord it will grow.

My dear brothers and sisters, friends, it is not wrong to have doubt. Our world has doubt. But what will you, will I, do with that doubt? Do we, as the father in this Gospel, offer it to the Lord or try to hold onto it and watch it diminish? Do we accept the narrative of our world that Christianity is backward and wrong or do we stand for Truth and express a desire to deepen our learning that we may discover Truth, discover Christ, more fully? Do we believe, while simultaneously asking God to help our unbelief?



News

Lent online Meetings — 7 pm Wednesdays and Fridays

We try to deepen our Faith during Lent, one way is by attending more services. While it is not currently possible to attend in person, we will be having Great Compline on Wednesday evenings and the Salutations to the Mother of God (sometimes called the Akathist Hymn) on Fridays. You would be most welcome to join us—strengthen your faith in the course of the Great Fast!

Get in touch and I will send you the details: priest@orthodoxeastleigh.uk.

Faith, not Superstition: Seeking Orthodox Christian Spirituality

The Orthodox Fellowship of St John the Baptist is organising a Study weekend for youth (loosely 18–35) entitled "Faith, not Superstition." It will be held online this year on Zoom, 28th–31st May.

More details, and registration, on the [Fellowship Youth](#) webpage.

WhatsApp Group

A new WhatsApp group has been created for the Twelve Apostles community: would you like to be a part of this? Let me know!

Twitter Feed

I have also created a new Twitter account for the community: do follow us [@12ApostlesHants](#).

Names for prayer

If you have not yet done so, please do send me a list of those whom you would like me to pray for at the Liturgy. Please separate them out into four groups:

Living who are Orthodox
Living who are not Orthodox
Departed who are Orthodox
Departed who are not Orthodox

Just their Christian (first) names are needed. Please include your own names at the top of the list.

Monastery of St John the Baptist talks

Each Sunday evening, 5.30–7pm, the Monastery in Essex, founded by St Sophrony, produces a talk on Zoom. Up until now these have been given either by Archimandrite* Peter, the abbot, or by Archimandrite Zacharias. You need to register for these in advance.

If you would be interested in joining the talks, please get in contact and I can send you the registration details. They are of great benefit.

[* Archimandrite is a title for a senior priest who is celibate.]

Archimandrite Philip: Ten at Ten

Also online, Archimandrite Philip of the monastery of our Archdiocese in Shropshire produces a Bible-study every weekday at 10 am from his YouTube channel—if you cannot watch live they are archived. Although called *Ten at Ten*, its length is somewhat a changeable feast.

You can reach his YouTube channel by [clicking here](#) or by searching "Archimandrite Philip" on YouTube.

Live stream

The [Monastery of Saints Antony and Cuthbert](#), Shropshire, is live-streaming its services for all who are unable to go to their own churches. These are over YouTube and can be accessed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfWMaefJYgFEZkYiK2WmeEw>

Usually Vespers on Saturday evenings at 5 pm and Matins and Liturgy on Sunday mornings from 7.30 am.

Resources

Have a look at our website — orthodoxeastleigh.uk

If you click on the "Blog" link, [or directly here](#), you will see all past emails as well as sermons etc.

Our Facebook Page, facebook.com/orthodoxeastleigh, too, has daily additions during the week as well as on feast days. Please do like and share our page and content so we may reach a wider group of people.

Our community has a Twitter handle, [@12ApostlesHants](#).

Do you receive the weekly (on Fridays) text message? If not, then let me know.

Saints and Feasts

Thursday 8th April — Holy apostles Herodion, Agabus, Rufus and Asyncritus of the Seventy.

Friday 9th — Martyr Euphychius. St Theodore, Abbot of Crowland (870).

Saturday 10th — Holy Martyr Terrence and his companions.

Sunday 11th — Sunday of St John Climacus ("of the Ladder"). Holy Martyr Antipas. St Guthlac of Crowland, the Hermit (714).

Monday 12th — St Basil the Confessor.

Tuesday 13th — St Martin the Confessor, Pope of Rome (655).

Wednesday 14th — Holy Apostles Aristarchus, Pudens and Trophimus of the Seventy.

Thursday 15th — Holy Hieromartyr Leonidas. St Padarn of Wales, Bishop and Founder of Llandabarn Fawr (5th-6th).

Can I help you?

I am here for you, you need only ask. Is there a way I can support your life of faith? Get in touch.

Can you help the mission?

Yes, absolutely. Offer yourselves to the Lord: pray! Make available to him all your talents and ask him how he would like you to use them — listen for his reply.

Your prayers!

With love in Christ

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