



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA  
PARISH OF ST. VASILIOS, BRUNSWICK, VICTORIA

SUNDAY  
13 MARCH 2016  
Volume 5—Issue 4  
013/03/2016—19/03/2016

# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 13 —19 MARCH 2016



<b>SUNDAY</b> <b>13 MARCH</b>  Forgiveness Sunday	Cheesefare Sunday —St. Matthew 6: 14-21 • <b>7.30– 11.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy <b>SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR AGES 5 TO 17 YEARS TAKES PLACE STRAIGHT AFTER HOLY COMMUNION. CLASSES TAKE PLACE IN THE DOWNSTAIRS ROOMS BEHIND THE CHURCH. BRING YOUR CHILDREN ALONG TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR ORTHODOX FAITH AND GOD'S LOVE FOR EACH ONE OF US.</b>
<b>MONDAY</b> <b>14 MARCH</b>  <b>CLEAN MONDAY</b> <b>(FAST FOR GREAT LENT BEGINS)</b>	• <b>9.00am</b> Service of Holy Unction • <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall • <b>6.00pm</b> Service of Great Compline with 1st section of Great Canon
<b>TUESDAY</b> <b>15 MARCH</b>	• <b>6.00pm</b> Service of Great Compline with 2nd section of Great Canon • <b>7.00pm</b> Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord, Coburg Youth Group will meet in Coburg Church Hall. The meeting will begin with the Compline Service in English.
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> <b>16 MARCH</b>	• <b>8.00– 9.30am</b> Service of Presanctified Liturgy • <b>6.00pm</b> Service of Great Compline with 3rd section of Great Canon
<b>THURSDAY</b> <b>17 MARCH</b>	• <b>6.00pm</b> Service of Great Compline with 4th section of Great Canon
<b>FRIDAY</b> <b>18 MARCH</b>	• <b>7.00pm</b> Service of Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos
<b>SATURDAY</b> <b>19 MARCH</b>  <i>St Theodore Commemoration</i> <i>Of His Miracle with Kollyva</i> <b>3rd Saturday of Souls</b>	• <b>7.00– 10.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy • <b>3.45pm</b> Service of Vespers

### Telephone Contact Numbers

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Fr. Athanasios  
and  
Fr. Ephraim

are available  
at the Church

every Monday to Friday  
between  
4.00 and 6.00pm

for Holy Confession and  
any spiritual need.

### Vespers of Forgiveness (in Greek)

This evening  
6:30pm - 8:00pm St Eustathios Church, 221 Dorcas St, South Melbourne

A very solemn and beautiful way to enter the period of Great Lent.

His Grace Bishop Ezekiel of Dervis will be presiding together with His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis and they will be joined by all the Clergy of Melbourne. At the completion of Vespers, we enter Great Lent by seeking the forgiveness and blessing of our Clergy as well as from one another.

## Forgiveness – The Hardest Love of All

I cannot think that any of my readers is a stranger to forgiveness, either the need to be forgiven or the need to forgive. The need to forgive, according to the commandment of Christ, extends well beyond those who ask for our forgiveness: we are commanded to forgive our enemies – whom I presume would rarely want to ask for our forgiveness.

Of course, our experience of those who are truly enemies is that we do not want to forgive them. We do not trust them; the wound has been too deep; their offense is not against us but against someone we love who is particularly vulnerable. I could enlarge the list but we are all too familiar with it. The reasons we find it hard to forgive our enemies is endless.

But the commandment remains – not as a counsel of how to live a healthier, happier life – but with the added reminder that we will only find forgiveness as we forgive. Forgiveness is not optional – but a fundamental spiritual action which we must learn to use as though our salvation depended upon it – for it does.

Several times in Scripture forgiveness of others (including enemies) is linked with our becoming like God, being conformed to His image. Thus when I think of forgiveness I think as well of the whole life of salvation – for the path to being restored to the fullness of the image of Christ runs directly through the forgiveness of our enemies. It may indeed be the very key to our salvation (as it is worked out in us) and its most accurate measure.

Having said that, however, is also to say that this commandment to forgive is not of man – we do not have it in us to fulfill this commandment in and of ourselves. St. Gregory of Nyssa once said that “man is mud whom God has commanded to become God.” Of course it is utterly and completely impossible for mud to do such a thing (unless God make it so).

All that being said, grace is the foundation of forgiveness. We pray for forgiveness to enter our heart. We beg for forgiveness to enter our heart. We importune God for forgiveness to enter our heart.

Even as a product of grace – we do not begin with the hardest things but with the easiest. We do not begin fasting by tackling the most strict regimen. We do not begin prayer with an effort to pray continually for forty days (or some other great feat). Such efforts would either crush us with their difficulty or crush us with our success.

These are a few thoughts on beginning the life of forgiveness:

- Begin by struggling to form the habit of forgiveness in the smallest things. With a child, with traffic, with little irritations. Do not struggle in a small way but throw yourself into forgiveness. It should become a habit, but a habit of grace, a large action.
- Use this prayer for the enemies who seem to be beyond your ability to pray: “O God, at the dread judgment, do not condemn them for my sake.” This places forgiveness at a distance and even a hard heart can often manage the small prayer of forgiveness at such a distance.
- Be always aware of your own failings and constantly ask for God’s forgiveness. “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.”
- As much as possible cultivate in your heart the understanding that all human beings are broken and victims of the fall. None of us enters a world of purity, nor do we enter the world fully functional as a human being. It is the gradual cultivation of mercy in our heart. Many will complain that our culture already has a “cult of victimization” in which no one takes responsibility for their actions. The same people will imagine that the world would be better if only everyone took more responsibility. But they themselves will not take on the responsibility that belong to us all. As Dostoevsky says, “Each man is responsible for everything before everyone.” Thus the complaint comes out of our pride. We think we ourselves are not responsible for the state of the world as it is and that if only others were as good as we were the world would be better. This is a lie.
- The proper response to taking such responsibility is to pray and ask forgiveness. Feeling guilty is generally another self-centered action and is not the same thing as asking forgiveness.
- Make a life confession at least once a year – being careful to name as many resentments as you can remember (this last advice comes from Met. Jonah Paffhausen).

*“But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back” (Luke 6:27-38).*

Fr. Stephen Freeman