



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

SUNDAY
21 FEBRUARY 2016
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PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN



PROGRAM FOR 21—27 FEBRUARY 2016

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Fr. Athanasios
is available
at the Church

every Monday to Friday
between
4.00 and 6.00pm

for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

SUNDAY 21 FEBRUARY <i>(TRIODION BEGINS)</i>	Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee • 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
MONDAY 22 FEBRUARY	• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
TUESDAY 23 FEBRUARY	• 7.00pm Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord, Coburg Youth Group will meet in our Church Hall. The meeting will begin with the Compline Service in English.
WEDNESDAY 24 FEBRUARY <i>First and Second Finding Of the Head of St John Baptist</i>	• 7.30– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SATURDAY 27 FEBRUARY	• 4.00pm Service of Vespers

THE TRIODION

For our Holy Fathers, the purpose of the entire Triodion was to remind us in brief of God's benefaction to us from the beginning and to instill in the memory of all how we were fashioned by Him, and how we violated the commandment which He gave us for the sake of our nakedness; how we were banished from the delight of Paradise and expelled through the envy of our enemy the serpent, the Author of evil, who was brought down on account of his pride, and how we remained outcasts from the good things of Paradise and were led around by the Devil; how the Son and Word of God, moved by compassion, bowed the Heavens and came down, dwelt in the Virgin and became man for our sake, and through His own way of life showed us how to ascend back to Heaven, through humility, fasting, and refraining from evil deeds, and through His other actions; how He suffered, arose, and ascended to the Heavens, and sent forth the Holy Spirit upon His Holy Disciples and Apostles; and how He was proclaimed Son of God and perfect God by them throughout the world; what the Divine Apostles accomplished through the Grace of the All-Holy Spirit; and that they gathered together all the Saints from the ends of the earth through their preaching, replenishing the world above, which was the goal of the Creator from the very beginning.

This, then, is the purpose of the Triodion.

The Publican and the Pharisee

(Luke 18:10-14)

Jesus Christ shared the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee with us to warn us of the great spiritual danger of arrogant self-confidence in our own righteousness, coupled with contempt for those whom we consider to be beneath us. In this way Jesus sought to protect us from the terrible spiritual sickness of Pharisee-ism.

This disease of the soul first manifests itself as absolute confidence and trust in the rightness of our own point of view and judgement; it presupposes our personal superiority over others. And this twisted expression of self-confidence quickly degenerates into uncritical self-satisfaction and self-righteousness, into a kind of mindless self-admiration. It takes endless pleasure in the self, and in all that it does.

Let us look at the Pharisee in today's parable. He goes into the Temple of God to offer incense to his own self-idol. He proclaims his saintliness and enumerates his good works. He admires and praises himself. He, after all, is not like other people who are up to their necks in immorality and evil. In the midst of his supposed prayer he does not hesitate to spill the poisonous bile of his hatred for the Publican whom he sees praying off in a distant corner. With exaggerated self-satisfaction he refers to his careful fasting and his generous support of the temple. He is indeed, a fastidious observer of the law of the covenant.

And even though we feel repulsed by the attitude and behaviour of the Pharisee, we need to be honest enough to admit to ourselves that there are more than a few times when we astonishingly resemble him. After all, who among us does not want others to think that we are better people than we actually are? Which one of us does not suffer from some lack of respect toward others? Is there even one of us who is very lenient in his judgement of others, and sterner in his own self-criticism? I sincerely doubt it. Every one of us, more or less, has something of that Pharisee inside of us. Something of that self-adulation and righteousness. And so to protect ourselves from infection by this disease requires nothing less than constant struggle and vigilant effort on our part.

A truly Christian heart seeks to do what is just and right as a simple and natural expression of our responsibility as persons. But even then we understand that our good deeds do not reflect perfection and so should not be the cause of weaning pride on our part. That is why St. Vasilios, who devoted his entire life to the loving service of others wrote, "Even if we were somehow able to do absolutely everything that is required of us. we would still have to conclude that we are unworthy servants of the Lord. And this is because after having done all this, we will only have fulfilled our basic duty and obligation and nothing more."

This condemnation of the smug self-satisfaction of the Pharisee, leads us to the justification of the Publican, who keenly feels and readily acknowledges his personal inadequacies. The Publican is admittedly burdened by a host of sins. But he is acutely aware of his sinfulness and spiritual poverty. And so he stands back, in the farthest corner of the temple. He does not dare to even lift his eyes toward heaven. With heavy sighs, he whispers his short prayer, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

His prayer is a request, a plea actually, that is filled with contrition. And this contrition, this acknowledgement and confession of personal imperfection, is nothing less than the very cornerstone of the entire spiritual life. And this is because it is inseparably bound with humility of the soul; and it is humility that allows divine grace to transfigure and sanctify our lives.

Perhaps the attitude that we need to acquire if we wish to offer prayer that is acceptable before God, is summed up in the words of Jesus himself who said to us, "Come to Me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and in Me you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matt. 11:28. May we too approach the altar of God with that same gentleness of spirit, and that same humility of heart and soul.

Reverend Andrew Demotses

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America