



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

SUNDAY
28 FEBRUARY 2016
Volume 5—Issue 2
28/02/2016—05/03/2016

PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 28—5 MARCH 2016



SUNDAY 28 FEBRUARY	Sunday of the Prodigal Son—Luke 15: 11-32 • 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
MONDAY 29 FEBRUARY	• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
TUESDAY 1 MARCH	• 7.00pm 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.
WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH	• 5.00pm Paraklisis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
SATURDAY 5 MARCH <i>1st Saturday of Souls</i>	• 7.00– 10.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy • 3.45pm Service of Vespers

Telephone Contact Numbers

St Vasilios Church
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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.

WORDS FROM THE CHURCH FATHERS

Do not say: "I have sinned much, and therefore I am not bold enough to fall down before God." Do not despair. Simply do not increase your sins in despair and, with the help of the All-merciful One, you will not be put to shame. For He said, "he who comes to Me I will not cast out." (John. 6:37)

And so, be bold and believe that He is pure and cleanses those who draw near to Him. If you want to accomplish true repentance, show it with your deeds. If you have fallen into pride, show humility; if into drunkenness, show sobriety; if into defilement, show purity of life. For it is said, "Turn away from evil and do good." (I Pet. 3:11)

(St. Gennadius of Constantinople, The Golden Chain, 87-89)

YOUR BODY BELONGS TO THE LORD - SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? . . . Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? . . . So glorify God in your body. I Corinthians 6: 13, 15, 19, 20 (Epistle on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son)

Can you imagine if you went into church one morning with a can of spray paint and started desecrating the walls of the church? If you sprayed over the icons, if you wrote bad language in spray paint on the doors of the church? If you took a chain saw to the pews, and set fire to the carpet? Most of us can't conceive of such sacrilege. We love our church building. We appreciate its beauty. If you walked into a vandalized building, you'd wonder, where did all the beauty go?

Our bodies are temples. The Holy Spirit resides in each of us. When God created man, we read in Genesis 2:7, *"He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."* In other words, God put His Spirit into each of us, in the form of our souls, and this is how we become human beings. And during our lifetime, we are supposed to feed our souls and prepare them for the day when our earthly lives are over, when our souls will separate from our bodies and go back to God for judgment. Our bodies are the "temples" in which our souls live.

We desecrate our bodies when we fill our minds with hateful thoughts, and our mouths with hateful speech. We neglect our bodies when we fill them with bad food and when we are inactive and indifferent to others. We honor and our bodies when we maintain good hygiene, good diet, when we exercise, and when we love and serve others. Then our temples are in pristine condition.

In the Epistle of James, we read that *"every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights."* (James 1:17) Therefore, our bodies are gifts from God and should be honored as such. We are supposed to honor God with our bodies—with what we see, what we hear, what we say and what we do. If we fill our eyes with images of violence and lust, if our ears are filled with hateful thoughts, if our mouths are filled with filthy language and if our hands are used for hurting and taking, then the temple of our bodies will be desecrated, as if spray-painting our church and destroying its contents. Ideally we want to fill our eyes with images of beauty, our ears with sounds of encouragement, our mouths with words of praise for God and encouragement of our fellow man, and our hands to be used for helping and giving.

The gap between what is and what should be is called sin. For sin is not only "missing the mark," and doing the wrong thing, sin is failure to do the right thing. Indifference, for example, is a sin. The way for closing that gap is called repentance. And this is the theme on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son—closing that gap through repentance. The theme of Lent is the cleaning of our bodies, our temples, so that they shine with the radiance of the most beautiful Cathedral.

The Rev. Dr. Nikon Patrinos, a Greek Orthodox priest of blessed memory, wrote a beautiful quote that I have always held close to my heart:

Whenever I think of a church Cathedral, I find myself thinking of the Cathedral of one's own soul, in which he, in absolute solitude, and face to face with God, lives the most earnest and most decisive moment of his life. The Cathedral encloses within its splendid architectural lines something more than a physical achievement. In fact if the walls and the art of this edifice could speak, I am sure that they would voice the presence here and now of the joys and sorrows of our hearts as well as the upward flying of our souls. They would attest to the fact this building is a living entity, heart-beating and breathing, a treasure that is becoming constantly augmented as we grow in the life of Christ. (From the 1970 Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Yearbook)

While Fr. Nikon was referring to a physical church structure, his referral to the "Cathedral of one's own soul" has always struck a chord with me. As a priest, I spend a great deal of time making sure that the church I serve is clean, that the altar is always prepared and immaculate in its appearance. Most of us spend time cleaning our homes, our cars, our yards, our clothes. We want them to be immaculate and spotless as well. Patrinos compares a Cathedral to a living body, heart-beating and breathing as it grows in the life of Christ. Saint Paul encourages us to see our bodies as Cathedrals, with souls that are beautiful, immaculate and spotless. As we are vigilant with our earthly cares, let us remember to take care of our bodies, our temples, as well.

The cry of the Prodigal I offer to You, O Lord: I have sinned before Your eyes, O good one; I have squandered the wealth of the gifts You gave me, but receive me as I repent, O Savior, and save me. (From the Praises of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, Trans. by Fr. Seraphim Dedes)

Keep your "temple" clean today!