



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

SUNDAY
3 APRIL 2016
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PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 3—9 APRIL 2016

SUNDAY 3 APRIL	3rd Sunday of Lent—Veneration of the Holy Cross • 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy 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.
MONDAY 4 APRIL	• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall • 6.00pm Service of Great Compline
TUESDAY 5 APRIL	• 6.00pm Service of Great Compline • 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. • 7.30pm Young Adults and Married Couples Bible Study Group—in downstairs building behind the Church.
WEDNESDAY 6 APRIL	• 6.00pm Service of Presanctified Liturgy
THURSDAY 7 APRIL	• 6.00pm Service of Great Compline
FRIDAY 8 APRIL	• 7.00pm Service of Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos—4th Salutations
SATURDAY 9 APRIL	• 3.45pm Service of Vespers



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Fr. Athanasios
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are available
at the Church

every Monday to Friday
between
4.00 and 6.00pm

for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

On the Third Sunday of Great and Holy Lent, the Orthodox Church commemorates the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Services include a special veneration of the Cross, which prepares the faithful for the commemoration of the Crucifixion during Holy Week.

WORDS FROM THE CHURCH FATHERS

"Let us not then be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Be the Cross our seal made with boldness by our fingers on our brow, and on everything; over the bread we eat, and the cups we drink; in our comings in, and goings out; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we rise up; when we are in the way, and when we are still. Great is that preservative; it is without price, for the sake of the poor; without toil, for the sick; since also its grace is from God. It is the Sign of the faithful, and the dread of devils: for He *'triumphed over them in it, having made a show of them openly'* [Colossians 2:15]; for when they see the Cross they are reminded of the Crucified; they are afraid of Him, who *bruised the heads of the dragon*. Despise not the Seal, because of the freeness of the gift; but for this the rather honour your Benefactor."

— St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture 13.36*

INVITATION

**GOOD FRIDAY CHOIR PRACTISE FOR ΕΓΚΩΜΙΑ (LAMENTATIONS) WILL BE TAKING PLACE EVERY SUNDAY STRAIGHT AFTER THE DIVINE LITURGY - UPSTAIRS INSIDE THE CHURCH.
EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO JOIN OUR CHOIR.**

HOMILY ON HOLY CROSS SUNDAY

In today's Gospel the Lord says to us that if we want to be followers of His, disciples, we must take up our crosses and follow Him. And when we think of the Cross of the Lord, we think of His gradual, painful ascent to His Crucifixion, we think of the way of the Cross, of His death. And indeed, the Lord calls us, if we want to be faithful to Him, if we want to be His disciples, to be prepared to walk all the way with Him – all the way.

But on the other hand, we must remember that He does not call us to follow a road which He has not trod Himself. He is a Good Shepherd that walks ahead of His sheep, making sure that all is clear, that dangers have been removed, that they can walk safely in His footsteps. His call to take up our cross and to follow Him is a call, at the same time, to accept to be true disciples of Him, and also to do it in the certainty that He will never ask from us what He has not done or endured Himself. We can follow Him safely; we can follow Him with assurance, but also with a sense of peace in our heart and our mind.

And yet, this following is not devoid of tragedy because to be disciple of Christ we must, as the reading of the Epistle at our baptism warned us, die with Him in order to be risen with Him. To die means to renounce, in an act of loyalty, of friendship, of solidarity with Him, of respect and veneration for Him, of recognition of the cost to Him for His love of us, to renounce everything which was the cause of His death. We must reflect on everything which is within us which makes us alien to God, unworthy of ourselves, unworthy of His love.

And when we discover, whatever it may be, to set out to reject it out of our lives. It may be things that seem to be easy, or small, it may be things that are very heavy and difficult to reject. But we must not imagine that things which seem to be small things separate us less from God than those things which appear to be great to us. There is a story in the life of one of the ascetics to whom two persons came; the one had committed a grievous sin and the other one recognised only a multitude of little sins. And to make them understand that both matter and could be as destructive of life of the one as the other, he told the first one to go into the field and to find the biggest boulder that was to be found and bring it, and to the other one to collect pebbles, everywhere. The one found easily a boulder and brought it; the other one as easily found a multitude of little pebbles. And when they came back, he said to them, and now – go, and put them back exactly in the way where you found them. The first that brought the big boulder found easy to find the place, it was deeply imprinted in the earth, and to place the boulder exactly where it had lain. The other one, after hours, and hours, and hours came back with all the pebbles, because they had been collected at random, and yet, it was impossible to remember where. So is it with our sins: there is nothing which is small, and there is nothing which is great, if – and the 'if' is important – if we do not find a way of putting it aside.

So, let us reflect on this. In the weeks of preparation for Lent, we were confronted in one parable after the other, in one reading after the other with images of sin; the blindness of Bartimeus, the pride of the Pharisee, the rejection of his father – our God! – by the prodigal son; we were confronted with the reading of the judgement in which it was so clearly set out that we are not going to be judged on the faith we professed, but on whether we were human throughout our lives, whether we were simply human, perceptive, cruelly sensitive to the sufferings of other people, and whether we have done for them, our neighbour, all that could be done, whether we have loved our neighbour actively as we wish to be loved actively by our neighbour. And then we were confronted with the days of the end of this period of preparation when week after week it was twilight and darkness that was revealed to us within ourselves by the readings if we only had the honesty to respond to the message of God.

And then we entered into a new period of time; into Lent proper; the period which is called 'the spring' – because this is the meaning of the word 'lent', a time of newness and of renewal, a time when God can, can make old things new if we only allow Him to. And we are confronted with the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the triumph of Orthodoxy when the Church proclaimed that God had become man, that man was so great, so vast, and also so precious to God that He gave His life for Him, a God of sacrificial love, a God who was prepared to live and die for us because He treasures us so much.

And then, the next Sunday, the Sunday of Gregory Palamas – the proclamation of the fact that we are truly called to be partakers of the divine nature according to the promise and the word of Saint Peter in his Epistle: that God wants to give Himself to us, that divine grace is God Himself pouring Himself into us and giving us a possibility, a chance, if we are only capable of responding to it, of making Him our King, enthrone Him as a Judge and Ruler of our mind, as the One Who rules our heart, the One Whose will is our will, the One Who may cleanse us even in our bodies of all sins spiritual and fleshly.

And now, we are going to see one after the other what the grace of God accepted, heroically received, can make of people: in the person of Saint John of the Ladder, in the person of Saint Mary of Egypt, in the person of every sinner who is being remembered in these weeks, and who by the power, and the grace, and the love of God, but also by his heroic, wholehearted, sincere response proved capable of receiving what God was giving.

And then, we will come to Holy Week; and from the light which has shone as a promise, which had dimly or brightly in the Saints, we will see the blinding light of love Divine incarnate, of what God means when He says that He loves us. And again, it is judgement, because if men, women, children as frail as we are, could respond as the Saints did, what are we going to say to God if we respond in no manner to His own sacrificial, crucified love?

And so, from the twilight of sin revealed to us, to the light which has shone through the Saints and in the Saints, of the Divine grace, we come to the light pure, perfect, revealed in God, and at each stage we are told by God: are you going to respond to this? Is the horror of darkness not sufficient to make you shudder? Is the vision of what can be done not enough to inspire you? Is My Own life and death for your sake not sufficient to move you? We are given one chance after the other to change, to respond: let us do it! Let us make haste to do it! There is a passage in the Great Canon in which it says, Let the hand of Moses covered with leprosy convince you that God can cleanse your own life which is covered in leprosy... Yes – if leprosy could be washed by an act of God, all leprosy which stains us, destroys us in soul, in body, which undermines the purity of our heart, darkens our soul, makes our will unfaithful to our own vocation and to the calling of God, all that can be healed.

And so we can enter into these days with hope, because one sigh of the Publican was enough to make him a child of the Kingdom, to restore him to wholeness. Let us bring at least one sigh from the depth of our heart – and salvation is ours... Glory be to God, Glory be to God in all things... Amen.

- Metropolitan of Surozh