



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN



PROGRAM FOR 17—23 JULY 2016

<p>SUNDAY 17 JULY</p> <p><i>St Marina, Great-Martyr</i></p>	<p>Fathers of the Fourth Council —Matthew 5: 14-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy <p>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.</p>
<p>MONDAY 18 JULY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
<p>TUESDAY 19 JULY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>WEDNESDAY 20 JULY</p> <p><i>Glorious Prophet Elijah the Thisbe</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy • 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
<p>SATURDAY 23 JULY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

WORDS FROM THE CHURCH FATHERS

When are we living in Christ? When we live according to His Gospel and His Church. For He Himself, and not only His Gospel, is in the Church with all of His perfections and virtues.

The Church is the eternally living Body of the God-man Christ. In her we find the medium of the holy mysteries. In her we find the means of holy good deeds.

Our Lord Jesus Christ abides inseparable from the Church in this world. He abides with each member of the Church throughout all ages. He has His entire self for us in the Church, and continually gives Himself to us entirely, so that we might be enabled to live in this world as He lived.

-St. Justin Popovich, *Explanation of I John, 4:9, 17*

My Light in the World

As Orthodox Christians, what's the first thing we do when we walk into to the church? If we say 'have a lengthy conversation with fellow parishioner' that may be true but of course it is not correct. The first thing we do, or that we are supposed to do, is light a candle, saying a prayer, placing it in the sand, venerating the icon and then taking our place in the nave to worship God. The practice of lighting a candle when entering is rooted in the Paschal tradition of receiving the light of Christ from the priest at the midnight Resurrection service. He exits the altar with a lit candle while the following hymn is chanted: "*Come receive the light from the light, that is never overtaken by night; and glorify Christ who is risen from the dead*" (Deute lavete phos). The utter darkness within the building is quickly overcome with light as the priest passes the flame to the faithful and they in turn pass it on to others.

This same light is given to each one of us at our baptism, when our nouna or nouno (godmother or godfather) holds the candle and us, processing around the font as we chant, "*All those who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia!*" We are to carry this light with us into our marriage as both the husband and wife hold a lit candle during the wedding ceremony/sacrament. This light also accompanies us when we die and return to Christ as the lit candle is placed at the end of our casket on the solea in the church.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). We not only receive His light in baptism, we become light ourselves. This is why Jesus says to His disciples in today's gospel reading (Matthew 5:14-19) for the Feast of the Three Hierarchs, 'you are the light of the world' (v.14). Notice that he did not say, 'you are the light of your little group' or 'you are the light of Jerusalem.' He says, "You are the light of the world." He does not say to us, 'You are the light of St. George Church' or 'of the city of St. Paul'. 'You are the light of the world' implies that the light must be shared and spread throughout the whole world. The light of Christ is not to hidden by putting it under a basket (v.15). Of course, the light begins spreading with us and our close circle of family and friends. We cannot be invisible Christians because an invisible Christian is no Christian at all. The Gospel of the Baptismal service (Mt.28:16-20) is about the Great Commission in which Jesus tells the apostles to go unto all the world and baptize (v.19), thereby spreading His light.

Christ says in today's gospel passage, "Let your light shine so that people may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is heaven" (v.16). The implicit message here is that the light of Christ shines through good works done in His name with humility. We do not do good in this world to bring glory to ourselves but to bring glory to God the Father from other people. This good, what we call righteousness, is explained in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) that follows today's gospel. In that sermon Jesus points to the deeper meaning of the Law of Moses. Our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees in Jesus time (Mt.5:20). We do not murder, but we must also stamp out anger within us (vv.21-26). We do not commit adultery nor fornication, but we must also quell lustful desire within us (vv.27-32). We do not swear or take an oath falsely, but we should strive never to have to take an oath in the first place. Our yes, should always be yes and our no should always be no (vv.33-37). We should resist evil but not with equal action. Rather, we turn our cheek, returning good for evil (vv.38-42). We love our neighbour but we should love our enemies also (vv.43-48). These are some of the many ways we can let the light of Christ shine.

A candle or an oil lamp or the battery of a flashlight will eventually wear down and burn out. Therefore it must be replenished in order to radiate light. In a similar manner, the light of Christ within us must be replenished. How? Looking back to our baptism, this sacrament in the early Church was called 'fotisma/fotisis' or 'illumination'. Before being baptized, the catechumen faces the West, the direction where the sun sets, which is symbolic of darkness and evil, and then renounces Satan. After this, the catechumen faces the East, where the sun rises, and professes adherence to Christ, 'I do unite myself to Christ!' This action of turning, from darkness to light, from Satan to Christ is called repentance and we need to do it often, as much as possible; everyday, even every minute if necessary.

Fr. Anthony Coniaris says that the light (of Christ) will not remain in us as long as we are harbouring an unconfessed sin. The natural fallen humanity within us has a perverse antipathy to the Light because it exposes sins. Therefore, sin must go if the light is to remain. That will not happen if we love darkness more than light (John3:19). Likely, many people are atheists for moral, rather than intellectual, reasons. They choose darkness over light, atheism over belief. Listen to John the Evangelist, '¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed' (Jn.3:19-20). When the sun shines into the altar through the windows of the apse, I can see all the cobwebs and dust on the tabernacle and altar table. Without the sun I thought everything was clean. It wasn't but as soon as I noticed it, I cleaned it. Likewise, Bishop Theophan the Recluse says that when the light of Christ shines on us and reveals our sins, we need to repent immediately and let Jesus erase those sins.

Fr. Coniaris goes on, we should ask ourselves, 'What do a car headlight covered with mud, a window covered with soot, and a person spotted with sin have in common?' The answer is that all are incapable of allowing light to shine for the benefit of others. It doesn't matter how bright and pure the light is, the net result will be dimness and darkness until the filth is dealt with. The problem is not the source of the light (Jesus) but the vessel through which the light is shining. Thus, we can block, dim, colour or distort the light of Christ that is shining forth from us. Jesus specifically warns us about this possibility. In the Lukan (ch.11) version of today's passage, He says, '³³No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. ³⁴The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. ³⁵Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. ³⁶If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.' How are we passing along the light of Christ?

How many of us can find our tv remote when it's completely dark? We can if it's always clutched in our hand but if not, we can find it because the buttons glow. That's because they have a phosphorus element which absorbs light and then slowly releases it. At or shortly after our baptism, we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. We literally receive the light of Christ within us and we must keep receiving it in order for us to keep glowing. The practice of never or rarely receiving Holy Communion is a relic of our pious but ignorant past. Frequent communion, along with frequent confession is the ideal according to the canons and teachings of the saints. Moses' face was shining when he descended from Mt. Sinai after being in God's presence (Ex.34:35). St. Stephen the Archdeacon, because of his great faith, his face was shining as he was being stoned to death by the Jews (Acts 6-7). Jesus Himself, His face was shining as bright as the sun when He was transfigured on Mt. Tabor revealing His glorious divinity to His disciples.

If we think our problems to big, our sins too great or our God too small to help us, consider that one small candle can burn down a whole house and a city. (Mrs. O'Leary's cow in Chicago). One small candle can illumine the path for a traveller at night. Likewise, just a tiny spark of faith can kindle a life-changing *revolution within us*. I will conclude with the words of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Russian Orthodox Soviet dissident. '*Gradually, it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart. Since then I have come to understand the truth of all the religions of the world: they struggle with the evil inside every human being. It's impossible to expel evil from the world in its entirety, but it is possible to constrict it within each person.*' (The Gulag Archipelago).

The revolutions of the world try to destroy the outer evils, but they cannot touch the inner evil in man's heart. That is why they are doomed to failure. The only true revolution is the one instituted by Jesus Christ - the revolution called repentance.