



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

SUNDAY  
23 OCTOBER 2016  
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# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 23—29 OCTOBER 2016



<b>SUNDAY</b> <b>23 OCTOBER</b>  <i>St James, Brother of the Lord</i>	Sixth Sunday of Luke —Luke 8: 26-39 • <b>7.30– 11.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy <b>SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR AGES 5 TO 17 YEARS TAKE 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>24 OCTOBER</b>	• <b>9.00am</b> Service of Holy Unction • <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
<b>TUESDAY</b> <b>25 OCTOBER</b>	• <b>7.00pm</b> Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord, Coburg Youth Group will meet in Coburg Hall. The meeting will begin with the Compline Service in English.
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> <b>26 OCTOBER</b>  <i>Great-Martyr Demetrios the Myrrh-flowing</i>	• <b>7.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy • <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
<b>FRIDAY</b> <b>28 OCTOBER</b>  <i>Holy Protection of the Theotokos</i>	• <b>7.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy

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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

If you want to attain salvation, learn and keep in your heart all that the holy Church teaches and, receiving heavenly power from the mysteries of the Church, walk the path of Christ's commandments, under the direction of lawful pastors, and you will undoubtedly attain the Heavenly Kingdom and be saved.

All of this is naturally necessary in the matter of salvation, necessary in its entirety and for all.  
Whoever rejects or neglects any part of it has no salvation.

- St. Theophan the Recluse, *Five Teachings on the Path to Salvation*, 3

Sinners that repent are still saved; both publicans and fornicators cleansed by repentance enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The compassionate God still calls to Himself all that have turned away, and He awaits them and promises them mercy.

The loving Father still receives His prodigal sons come back from a far country and He opens the doors of His house and clothes them in the best robe, and gives them each a ring on their hand and shoes on their feet and commands all the saints to rejoice in them.

- + St. Tikhon of Zadonsk: *Journey to Heaven, Part II: The Way of Salvation*

## 6th Sunday of Luke : Orthodox Homily on Demons and Halloween

Christ's last commandments to His Disciples, the Holy Apostles, before His Ascension was "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matt. 28:19-20). The Apostles and their descendants have carried out this holy mission since that time, planting the cross of Christ throughout the world, bringing the truth and new life in Christ to all peoples.

It's also been the teaching of the Church since that time that the Orthodox Faith is sent to transform and transfigure a culture, a people, through baptism. As Orthodox, we do not destroy the cultures we evangelize, we redeem them. We bring the light of Christ to them and expel the evil from them while recognizing their distinct identity within the larger Body of Christ.

For this reason, when St. Innocent came to Alaska, for instance, he didn't attempt to make the native peoples 'Russian', but rather, learned and then translated the holy services and divine texts and Gospels into Aleut, Tlinget, and the other native tongues. Their 'spirit houses' were baptized with crosses and the indigenous peoples were taught the resurrection of the dead.

But where does the 'baptism' of the American culture stand today? We see that the Protestantism and Catholicism brought here prior to Orthodoxy, while still the dominant majority has declined in influence. Holy days are now truly 'holidays' for most and have lost much of their original meaning or even been completely divorced from their original Christian purpose.

We see this transformation in our modern American celebration of Halloween, for instance, what was, originally called, "All Hallows Eve." What was a solemn and sacred remembrance of those faithfully departed, much as our Soul Saturday commemorations are during Lent, has now become in many parts an opportunity to celebrate being a witch, a ghoul, or some monster. The underlying message inherent in today's secularized culture is that evil doesn't really exist, that these caricatures of witches, monsters, ghouls are part of a fictitious, mythological past, and are, therefore, harmless. Many are not even familiar with the holiday's Christian meaning. Certainly, rather than being baptized, the culture has usurped the meaning of this holy day.

There are two errors, flip sides of the same coin, that we can commit in this thinking: One is that we teach others that demons and those who worship Satan are just scary but innocent fun and that there's really no such thing as witches, demons, and the devil himself; the other is to attribute too much power to Satan and his minions, the demons, and those who serve them.

Holy Tradition clearly teaches us that Satan and his demons are a fallen entity that we have to contend with, fight against. St. Paul reminds us of this truth when he writes, "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

Our Lord Jesus Christ had numerous encounters with the possessed (those indwelt) by the demons; they were tormented and controlled, forced to do the demons' biddings and, ultimately, became their victims, destroying themselves and others. Today's Gospel is one such account.

The Gadarene demoniac is a man possessed and tormented by a whole legion of demons. He was, literally, out of his mind, naked, violent—little resemblance to a human being remained. He was "bound with chains and shackles" and lived in the tombs. He is truly among the living dead, so enslaved is he by the demons.

We don't know how he came to be possessed. There are many sins and practices that can give the devil a foothold. All people are capable of coming under demonic influence. Some actually come to be possessed by the demons. Demonic possession continues in our own day, but since many people no longer believe in evil even as they no longer believe in God, much of what is actually demonic possession is misunderstood or misdiagnosed.

Much of the evil we see in the world that we cannot explain can be attributed to demonic possession. Only the healing in Christ through the new life in Him, the exorcism of the demons, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and our continued "Yes" to God's healing work in our lives, can drive the demons away. There is power in the Name of Christ and His holy cross.

Exorcism is the first part of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and a necessary precursor to putting on Christ. We expel the demons and their influence from the neophyte so that Christ may come and make His abode with him through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We make the sign of the cross to put the demons to flight. We pray. We call on God daily for protection against our adversary, the devil, and deliverance from his minions, the demons.

Christ came that we may be free of the demons, their control and their influence, by choosing life with Him who is the Life of all. Christ came to equip us by the Holy Spirit to do battle against the spiritual forces of wickedness, to overcome our passions and their temptations that wage war against our life with God, so that, we can triumph over the forces of evil and become witnesses of the hope for a truly deified, angelic life, that is the fruit of life, communion, with God.

As Orthodox, we're not to fear the demons: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world," (1 Jn. 4:4) St. John assures us. At the same time, as Orthodox we do not downplay the reality of the evil we're fighting against. Satan is described by Christ as the "murderer of man." He and his demons are bent on our destruction. We certainly don't pretend that witches and demons and ghouls are innocent fun or make them look 'cute', nor do we participate in activities that may make others think that this is what we believe as Orthodox Christians.

As for the Gadarene demoniac, Christ cast out those demons and sent them into a herd of swine and they drowned at sea. The man went his way, freed of his demonic enslavement and proclaimed through the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

What "great things" has God done for you? Have you thanked Him recently for His goodness, mercy, love, and faithfulness to us? Demonic possession is a reality. As Orthodox Christians we should think through how we participate in Halloween or anything that downplays that reality to make sure we're not contributing to an environment that denies the reality of spiritual warfare or which makes the servants of the evil one into something innocent, cute, or fun. The reality is that the demons and the evil one delight in this. We do not need to play into their hands. Instead, we have the opportunity to shine with the light of the Gospel, to baptize the culture through our own actions, bringing the light and truth of Christ into all that we do and say—not just at Halloween, but, more importantly, every day. We can teach our children examples of Saints who defeated the enemy and his minions—St. George, the dragon-slayer, St. John the Theologian, St. Anthony the Great, just to name a few. There is power in the Name of Jesus Christ, in His cross by which He defeated sin and death, all evil, and we call on His name.

Christ God gave the Gadarene demoniac new life, restoring his humanity. Christ God gives us new life by virtue of our baptism and our sealing by the Holy Spirit in Chrismation, continued growth through the sacramental life in Him. He offers us healing from the passions and the opportunity and strength to witness to His life-saving truth in the world around us. So, let us give thanks to God today for His freedom from the bonds of the enemy. Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you!

Fr. Robert Miclean, Holy Archangels Orthodox Mission