



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

SUNDAY
9 OCTOBER 2016
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PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 9—15 OCTOBER 2016



SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER <i>Holy Apostle James</i>	Second Sunday of Luke —Luke 7: 11-16 • 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 10 OCTOBER	• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER	• 7.00pm 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.
WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER	• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
THURSDAY 13 OCTOBER <i>St Chrysi</i>	• 7.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SATURDAY 15 OCTOBER	• 3.45pm Service of Vespers

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Fr. Athanasios
and
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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

“If at some time you show mercy to someone, mercy will be shown to you.

If you show compassion to one who is suffering (and of course, this is not a great deed) you will be numbered among the martyrs.

If you forgive one who has insulted you, then not only will all your sins be forgiven, but you will be a child of the Heavenly Father.

If you pray from all your heart for salvation – even a little – you will be saved.

If you rebuke yourself, accuse yourself, and judge yourself before God for your sins, with a sensitive conscience, even for this you will be justified.

If you are sorrowful for your sins, or you weep, or sigh, your sigh will not be hidden from Him and, as St. John Chrysostom says, ‘If you only lament for your sins, then He will receive this for your salvation.’”

+ St. Moses of Optina

Christ's Compassion and Integrity: Orthodox Homily on the Raising of the Son of the Widow of Nain

Luke 7:11-16

No one likes a hypocrite, someone who says one thing and does another. As Christians, we must be very careful not to condemn ourselves and scandalize others by not living out what we teach to be true. Instead, we must be people of integrity who live out our beliefs every day in what we say and do.

Jesus Christ is certainly the perfect example of a life lived with integrity, for He is a human being who is also divine. He Himself is the perfect integration of the image of God with God Himself. And He does not ask us, or anyone else, to do anything that He has not already done.

When we read the account of the Lord's raising of the son of the widow of Nain, we are probably reminded of St. James' teaching: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." And that is precisely what Christ does: He has compassion upon a widow who mourns the death of her only son. He comforts her, saying "Do not weep," and then touches the coffin, bringing the young man back from the dead.

The Lord's great act of compassion for this woman is a sign of our salvation. For we weep and mourn not only for loved ones whom we see no more, but also for the broken, disintegrated state of life that the sins of humanity—and our own sins—have brought to us and to our world. Death, destruction, hatred, fear, and decay in all their forms are the consequences of our refusal to live faithfully as those created in the image of God. We have worshipped ourselves, our possessions and our pride, and found despair and emptiness as a result, as well as slavery to our own self-centred desires. So we weep with the widow of Nain for losing loved ones and for losing ourselves.

The good news of the Gospel, however, is the compassion of God. Rather than simply observing human suffering and letting us bear the consequences of our actions, the Father sent the Son to enter into our suffering, into our distorted and disintegrated world, in order to set us right, to stop us from weeping, and even to raise us from the dead into the glory of the heavenly kingdom. The Son touched the coffin of the dead man and he arose. Christ's compassion for us is so profound that He also entered a coffin, a tomb, and even descended to Hades, the shadowy place of the dead because—out of love for humankind—He could not simply stand by and allow us to bear the full consequences of our actions.

You see, our faith is not fundamentally about justice or punishment or wrath for sinners. It is instead about the infinite and holy love of Christ Who will stop at nothing to bring the one lost sheep back into the fold, Who is not embarrassed to welcome home the prodigal son, and Who will even submit to death on a cross in order to destroy death by His glorious resurrection.

And, yes, we have our part to play in response to His love. If we seek to follow Jesus Christ, if we are members of His Body the Church, and are nourished by His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist, then His compassion must become evident in our lives. If we are partakers of the divine nature in Him, then His life must become ours such that, as St. Paul teaches, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." If we receive Christ's compassion, we must extend compassion to others, suffering with them in love, sharing their pain as best we can and going out of our way to show them the mercy and care that we have found in our Lord.

But we need to be clear: Extending Christ's compassion to others is not the same thing as being a wimp or making sure that everyone likes us. It took discipline, strength, and courage for the Lord to show compassion throughout His entirely earthly ministry, especially His journey to the cross. And every time that He healed the sick or raised the dead, He surely knew that the Pharisees and perhaps the Romans were watching, noticing Him as a threat to their power. And they certainly did not like Him or His ministry.

If we are to live the Christian life with integrity, we too must have the courage to show compassion to those who suffer, who mourn, and whose lives are filled with pain and disorder. Perhaps they brought some of these conditions upon themselves. Maybe they didn't always do the right thing and are reaping the consequences of their own bad choices. In some cases, they may actually believe that what they are doing is good. Well, so what? Isn't that the story of us all? Christ did not come to show mercy upon those who deserved it, for mercy is something that, by definition, we can't deserve. The widow of Nain and her dead son did not deserve the compassion of the Lord, but He showed love to them anyway. The relevance for our lives should be obvious. If we have integrity as Christians, we will respond to others with the same compassion that we have experienced in Jesus Christ.

This is not a calling for cowards afraid of their own shadow, for it requires discipline, self-control, and a strength of character beyond our own power. Unfortunately, it's become second nature for us to try to judge others as though we were God, as though it were our place to separate the sheep from the goats. Nothing gets in the way of mercy more than self-righteous judgment, for it so easily inflames our passions and gives us perverse pleasure in naming the faults of others. This prideful attitude quickly takes root in our hearts, weakening marriages and families, destroying friendships, giving us every excuse not to care for those who don't measure up to our standards, and making it impossible for us to live the Christian life with integrity.

Well, Jesus Christ certainly has integrity. Not only are God and humanity integrated in His own Person, He lived out the kind of life that He taught in the same fallen world that we experience every day. He came to bring us into His eternal life out of compassion. He suffered with us to the point of death. The One who was the highest became the lowest for our sakes.

If we want His compassion, let us be compassionate to those who suffer even as a result of their own bad choices and habits. That doesn't mean that we should give everyone exactly what they want, let them run our lives, or refuse to speak and act according to the truth, but it does mean that we sorrow with them in their pain and discern prayerfully how to do the fitting thing that best manifests Christ's love in our relationship with them.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, each of us may become a better living icon of our Lord's compassion. In order to do that, we must open our lives more fully to the presence of God, mindfully rejecting the lies that we tell ourselves about who is not worthy of our time, attention, and assistance. The greater focus we place on prayer, the more seriously we take our fasting, the more conscientious we are in confessing and repenting of our sins on a regular basis, the more aware we will become of the great mercy that the Lord has shown us and of where we need to grow in sharing His compassion with others.

Then we will grow in integrity as Christians, treating others as the Lord has treated us, and living out what we say we believe. And our lives will become signs of Christ's salvation, living evidence of His victory over sin and death and of the power of His unfathomable love. And that same holy compassion that raised the son of the widow of Nain will raise us, and others, into the blessed eternal life of the Kingdom.

Fr. Philip LeMasters