



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 13 —19 NOVEMBER 2016

SUNDAY 13 NOVEMBER <i>St. John Chrysostom</i>	Eighth Sunday of Luke —Luke 10: 25-37 • 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy 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.
MONDAY 14 NOVEMBER <i>Holy Apostle Philip</i>	• 7.00 am Orthros and Divine Liturgy • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
TUESDAY 15 NOVEMBER <i>Nativity Fast Period Begins</i>	• 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 16 NOVEMBER	• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
SATURDAY 19 NOVEMBER	• 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

KONTAKION

*You received divine grace from Heaven,
and by your own lips taught all to worship the One God in Trinity.
All-blessed, venerable John Chrysostom,
deservedly, we praise you for you are a teacher clearly revealing things divine.*

*Since it is likely that, being men, they would sin every day,
St. Paul consoles his hearers by saying 'renew yourselves' from day to day.
This is what we do with houses: we keep constantly repairing them as they wear old.*

*You should do the same thing to yourself.
Have you sinned today? Have you made your soul old?
Do not despair, do not despond, but renew your soul by repentance, and tears, and Confession,
and by doing good things. And never cease doing this.*

- St John Chrysostom

The Good Samaritan and Advent LUKE 10:25-37

I have a warning for you: Christmas is now only forty-four days away. And for most of us that means shopping, planning, travel, decorating, parties, and the busiest and most stressful time of the year. Unfortunately, most of our activities over the next six weeks will have little to do with the true meaning of Christmas: that the Son of God became a human being in order to bring us into the eternal life and joy of His kingdom. So it is a blessing that we have the period of Advent, of the Nativity Fast, to prepare to celebrate this unbelievably good and joyful news. For unless we prepare for Him through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, reconciliation, and repentance, we will not be ready to glorify Him at His birth.

Our familiar gospel text today reminds us what it means to worship and receive the Christ who is born at Christmas. One of the Pharisees, a religious lawyer, asked Jesus Christ what he needed to do in order to find eternal life. He already knew the answer: to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. But this lawyer wanted to justify himself, he wanted to find a loophole to make it easier to meet God's requirements. So he said, "And who is my neighbor?" Maybe he wanted to hear that only upstanding Jewish men like himself were worthy of his concern. Maybe he wanted to hear that it was enough to take care of his family members, to love those who loved him.

Christ knew what the man was up to, so He told him a story in which a person whom the Jews loved to hate—a Samaritan—was the only one who helped a Jewish man who had been attacked, robbed, and left for dead by the side of the road. Respectable Jewish leaders, a priest and a Levite, simply walked past the poor man and did nothing to help him. But the hated Samaritan was unbelievably generous toward this man, cleaning his wounds, physically taking him to an inn, paying for his lodging, and promising to return to check on him.

After hearing this story, even the lawyer saw the point. The Samaritan turned out to be the only one who was a neighbour to that Jewish man, for he alone showed mercy. The Savior concluded, "Go and do likewise." In other words, anyone who is in need is your neighbor. Show mercy to anyone who needs your help. That's what it means to love your neighbour as yourself.

As we stand forty-four days before Christmas, we must all acknowledge that we have fallen short of fulfilling the Lord's command. Like the Pharisee, we want to define our list of neighbors narrowly so that we can feel as though we have already mastered God's law. It's one thing if our children or parents or good friends need help, but what about someone whom we don't particularly like or who is very different from us in religion, race, nationality, politics, lifestyle, or in some other way. All too often, we use such excuses to convince ourselves that it really is a good thing to judge, hate, and ignore other people. But when we do so, we turn away from the One who was judged, hated, and rejected by the religious leaders of His day, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the Fathers of the Church saw the Good Samaritan as image of the Son of God. Purely out of love, He came to a world that rejected Him, that despised Him to the point that He was hung on a cross by those He came to save. Like the Samaritan, He was hated by respectable, powerful people. Yet He still became one of us, binding our wounds, giving life to the dead, and providing His Church as an inn, a hospital, in which we are healed and fulfilled by His boundless mercy and nourished by His own Body and Blood.

Also like the Samaritan, Christ made no distinction between different types of people. The Samaritan knew that the Jewish crime victim probably hated him. But he cared for him nonetheless. Likewise, our Lord was born, lived, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven for the salvation of all humanity. Of the Jews and Romans who crucified Him, Christ said from the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He is born at Christmas for the salvation of the entire world. And though we cannot fully understand this truth, all mercy, love, and goodness that any human being has ever shown has been the work of Christ. For He made us all in His image and likeness, and apart from Him no human being has any life or light.

As we confess in our pre-communion prayers, we ourselves are the chief of sinners. We must take care of the log in our own eye before worrying about the speck in our brother's eye. The more we grow in the Christian life, the more we will see that to judge others self-righteously is really only to judge ourselves and to reject the mercy and love of our Lord. Instead of wasting time as the self-appointed judges of others, we should stay busy with the way of selfless, humble love and service that Jesus Christ has shown us. We should care for others as the Samaritan cared for that Jewish man, who probably viewed him as an enemy.

You see, our faith calls us to prepare for Christmas in ways very different from what is common in our culture. It's not all about presents and purchases and parties and how to stuff ourselves without gaining weight. Instead, it is about growing in the mercy and compassion of Christ; it is about manifesting the true love for God and neighbor by which participate in the eternal life of the Holy Trinity. We should use the Nativity Fast, the weeks of Advent, to prepare as fully as we can to embrace the healing of our broken, corrupt humanity which Christ, the Second Adam, was born to restore. For the Christian life is not a set of arbitrary rules or exercises. Instead, it is the path by which sick, weak, battered, and discouraged people enter into the blessing and holiness for which we were created in the image and likeness of God.

If you have not done so already, give prayerful attention to how you will devote time, energy, and attention to prayer, fasting, almsgiving, repentance, and reconciliation this Advent. I would be glad to visit with you about how to use these practices in beneficial ways at this point in your spiritual journey. Consider making an Advent wreath at home, lighting an additional candle each week as you pray and read Scripture. Devote at least a few more minutes a day to prayer and Bible reading. When you are tempted to speak or act with hatred or judgment toward someone or to fall into despair or fear, say the Jesus Prayer, calling upon the Lord in humility for the calming of your inflamed passions. Practice some form of fasting or self-denial in order to gain strength in fighting self-centered desires. When you have the opportunity to help someone in any way, do so. Give some nonperishable food items for the poor. Are these small steps? Of course they are. They won't magically change the world into a paradise. But they will begin to change us by opening our lives bit by bit to the love which is our salvation, the love shown by the Good Samaritan, by our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. We will celebrate His birth, His incarnation, in forty-four days. Now we must prepare to receive Him by showing the same mercy to our neighbors that He has shown us. And who is our neighbour? Anyone who is in need. When it comes to how we treat others, nothing else should matter at all.

FR. PHILIP LEMASTERS