



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

SUNDAY  
4 DECEMBER 2016  
Volume 5—Issue 40  
27/11/2016 –03/12/2016

# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 4 —10 DECEMBER 2016



<b>SUNDAY</b> <b>4 DECEMBER</b>  <i>St Barbara, Great-Martyr</i>	Tenth Sunday of Luke —Luke 13: 10-17 • <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>5 DECEMBER</b>  <i>St Savas the Sanctified</i>	• <b>7.00 am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy • <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
<b>TUESDAY</b> <b>6 DECEMBER</b>  <i>St Nicholas of Myra, the Wonderworker</i>	• <b>7.00 am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy • <b>7.00pm</b> 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.
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> <b>7 DECEMBER</b>	• <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
<b>SATURDAY</b> <b>10 DECEMBER</b>	• <b>3.45pm</b> Service of Vespers

### Telephone Contact Numbers

St Vasilios Church  
9387 7693

Fr Athanasios  
9383 4151

Fr Ephraim  
0490 378 215

Website:  
[stvasiliosbrunswick.com](http://stvasiliosbrunswick.com)

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

In times of affliction, unceasingly call out to the merciful God in prayer.  
The unceasing invocation of the name of God in prayer is a treatment for the soul which kills not only the passions, but even their very operation.  
As a doctor finds the necessary medicine, and it works in such a way that the sick person does not understand, in just the same way the name of God, when you call upon it, kills all the passions, although we don't know how this happens.

- St. Barsanuphius the Great, Instructions, 421



“The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic  
His giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves.”

— St. Nicholas of Myra

## **St. Nicholas the Wonderworker: An Extraordinary Model of Ordinary Holiness**

It is all too easy to fall into despair over the violence, hatred, and depravity that we see in the world today; if we are not careful, these dark forces can easily inspire a paralysing fear in our own souls. In these weeks of the Nativity Fast that focus on joyful preparation for the coming of Christ, it is a temptation to lose hope that the Prince of Peace is really coming to bless, save, and heal us. Part of our challenge this Advent is to recognize that temptation for what it is: a temptation not to entrust ourselves, our loved ones, and this world to the only One Who can deliver us from the worry, pain, and loss that we know all too well, and that can easily overwhelm us.

Today's gospel passage introduces us to a woman who had been overcome physically by illness, being stooped over for eighteen years. Just imagine how tempted she must have been to abandon hope; perhaps she had wondered many times how she could go on from one day to the next. People have certainly lost faith and grown bitter over much less. But she had come to worship in the synagogue on the day when Christ was there teaching. We do not know if she knew that the Messiah would be there, but when He saw her, He healed her and she praised and thanked God. In response to those who criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath day, the Lord noted that people routinely take care of their animals on the day of rest. So how could it not be permissible to free a daughter of Abraham from her bondage of so many years on the Sabbath? He did not come to add to the burden of suffering people or to sit idly by due to a technicality, but to set us free.

The good news is that we are all the sons and daughters of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ. He is born to loose us all from the various forms of slavery, sickness, sin, and death that hold us captive. Perhaps that is why He was born in a time and place of violence and hatred, with His life at risk even as a small child from a jealous and bloodthirsty ruler. Perhaps that is why He lived in a world where people of different religions, political affiliations, and ethnic backgrounds despised and tried to kill one another. That is certainly why He accepted death on the Cross at the hands of both Jews and Gentiles in order to reconcile all humanity to God and to one another through His glorious resurrection on the third day. He came to loose the entire creation from its bondage to corruption and to bring us all into the new heaven and earth of His blessed and eternal Kingdom. He is truly the Second Adam in Whom all the sorrows and divisions of the first Adam are healed, set right, and restored.

That is our faith and hope, but sometimes we may wonder what it has to do with us who live in a world that often looks much more like a realm of corruption than an icon of salvation. Perhaps that is part of the reason that the Holy Spirit has led the Church to recognize some people as shining examples of holiness, as great models of what it means to be set free from bondage to sin and death in the world as we know it. For when we see that great cloud of witnesses who have finished the race and who are praying for us around the heavenly throne, we realize that, yes, it is possible to participate personally in God's salvation even for ordinary people who live in a world still captive to sin and death in so many ways. In the Orthodox Church, we call those great witnesses saints, for the root meaning of the word "saint" is holy. The saints have entered into the holiness of God through their faithfulness in the same darkened world in which we live.

On Tuesday we commemorate St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, a saint so beloved that he is the basis for the figure of Santa Claus. Living in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in what is now Turkey, St. Nicholas had a sizeable inheritance from his family, which he gave away in secret to the poor. He is particularly well known for throwing bags of gold through the open window of a poor man in order to save his daughters from being sold into the slavery of prostitution. Though he had wanted to live in seclusion as a monk, the Lord told him that he was to minister among the people, which he did after being providentially identified as the new Archbishop of Myra. By his prayers, ships were saved, sailors were rescued from drowning, and a famine was averted. His zeal for the faith was shown when he struck the heretic Arius at the Council of Nicaea, for which he was briefly jailed and stripped of his position as bishop. But several fathers of the council had the same dream that night in which they saw the Lord and the Theotokos restoring Nicholas as a bishop. So he was released and returned to his ministry the next day.

Fr. Thomas Hopko wrote that St. Nicholas is not known for anything particularly extraordinary in and of itself. He was simply a man of prayer and generosity who taught the truth, opposed error, and guided his flock as best he could. But in his ordinarieness, he became extraordinary in simple goodness. He became a living witness to the healing and fulfilment of the human being that Jesus Christ has made possible for each and every one of us. His calling was that of a monk who became a bishop, but the signs of his virtuous character are applicable to everyone. Perhaps that is why, even in our increasingly post-Christian world, he is remembered and loved to this day.

It is unlikely that any of us will ever be as famous as St. Nicholas. It is God's will, however, that everyone of us live as holy a life as he did by faithfulness to Jesus Christ in the ordinary details of our lives. He never sought to do anything other than what all Christians are called to do in one way or another. Most of us simply need to go about our humble lives from one day to the next, doing what we know we should do in order to participate more fully in the healing that Christ brings to our souls. In other words, our daily task is to live as those who are loosed from bondage to our sins, who are healed from our infirmities. Like the woman in today's gospel lesson, we must straighten up and give thanks to God. We are able to do that because Christ has become one of us, uniting humanity to divinity in Himself. In Him, we may fulfil our original vocation as those created in God's image and likeness. By the healing energies of His grace, we may become participants in the divine nature, shining with the light of the heavenly Kingdom even in our world with all its problems and temptations to despair.

Remember the troubled and dangerous times in which Christ brought salvation to the world. Recall the trials and tribulations of the prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors from biblical times to today. Think about how the ordinary way of St. Nicholas required daily commitment, sacrifice, and the acceptance of sorrows. A religion the main symbol of which is the Cross is not one that looks at the world with rose-coloured glasses. And if we allow ourselves to be shocked by the world's problems or our own personal struggles to the point that we fall into despair or simply embrace the darkness out of fear, we will have no part in the One born at Christmas for our salvation.

We simply face the same temptations and difficulties that fallen humanity has always faced in one form or another. It is through such difficult circumstances that faithful people come to shine with the light of the heavenly Kingdom. That was true of St. Nicholas, and it will also be true of us, if we follow his example of daily obedience in the ordinary details of our lives. If we pray from the depths of our souls, love and serve our neighbours, forgive our enemies, hold fast to the truth, call on the Lord's mercy when we fall short, and then get back on track, we will grow in holiness to the point that we will be ready to welcome our Saviour at His birth this year with joyful and hopeful hearts. That is the simple way of St. Nicholas. Regardless of the world's problems or our own personal struggles, this must also be our way in the remaining weeks of the Nativity Fast.