



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

SUNDAY  
19 MARCH 2017  
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19/03—25/03/2017

# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 19—25 MARCH 2017

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| <b>SUNDAY</b><br><b>19 MARCH</b>  | <b>Third Sunday of Lent, Veneration of the Holy Cross</b><br>- Mark 8: 34-38, 9:1<br>• <b>7.30– 11.00am</b><br>Orthros and Divine Liturgy   |
| • <b>SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES</b> (A free voluntary program organised by the Church)<br>Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at the time of Holy Communion until Church dismissal. We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years. Lessons are taught in a relaxed, friendly environment. Please bring your children along to learn of their rich Orthodox faith and come close to God and His Love. |   |
| <b>MONDAY</b><br><b>20 MARCH</b>  | • <b>9.00am</b><br>Service of Holy Unction<br>• <b>10.00am</b><br>Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.<br>• <b>6.00pm</b><br>Service of Great Compline   |
| <b>TUESDAY</b><br><b>21 MARCH</b>   | • <b>6.00pm</b><br>Service of Great Compline<br>• <b>7.00pm</b><br>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><br><b>22 MARCH</b>   | • <b>8.00– 9.30am</b><br>Service of Presanctified Liturgy<br>• <b>6.00pm</b><br>Service of Great Compline   |
| <b>FRIDAY</b><br><b>24 MARCH</b>  | • <b>7.00pm</b><br>Vespers and Service of Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos— Fourth Salutations to the Theotokos   |
| <b>SATURDAY</b><br><b>25 MARCH</b><br><i>Annunciation of the Theotokos</i>  | • <b>7.00– 9.30am</b><br>Orthros and Divine Liturgy<br>• <b>3.45pm</b><br>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

### The Annunciation.

*'For with God nothing shall be impossible' (Lk. 1:37).*

And God said: 'Let there be light', and there was light; until God spoke the word there was no light. Neither could anyone conceive of the nature of light until God spoke and light came to be. In the same way, when God spoke, the water and the dry land came into being, and the starry vault, the plants and the animals, and finally man. Until God spoke, there was nothing of all this, neither could anyone except God know what might exist. By the power of His word, God created all that was created in heaven and on earth. Whatever God wished to be and called into being, that had to be, and it was impossible for it not to be, because the word of God is irresistible and creative. The creation of the world is a great miracle wrought by the divine word.

Having created all things, God also established by His word the order and manner of existence of all things and their behaviour and relationship one with another. And this order and manner of existence which God has established is a great miracle of the divine word.

But, as well as this order and manner of existence among created things, visible and comprehensible to us, there is an order and manner of existence unseen and incomprehensible. From this invisible and incomprehensible order and manner of existence, which is a mystery hidden in the Holy Trinity, there have occurred, and continue to occur, phenomena which people call miracles. One such phenomenon was the conception of our Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of the most holy Virgin Mary, who had not known a man. This seems to be an interruption of the visible and comprehensible order and manner of existence, but it is not at all a strange event for the invisible and incomprehensible world. This birth is indeed a great wonder; perhaps no greater wonder has ever been revealed to us mortals. But the entire created world is itself a miracle, and the entire visible and comprehensible order of things is a miracle, and just as this miracle came to be by the word of God, so in the same fashion the Lord took human form in a virgin's womb. Both the one and the other took place by the power of the word of God. Therefore the wondrous Gabriel replied to the Virgin's question (a question asked by all generations: 'How can this be?'): 'With God nothing that He says shall be impossible.' .Amen.

### **The Third Sunday of Lent—The Sunday of the Veneration of the Precious Cross —Mark 8: 34-38, 9:1**

In today's gospel lection, taken from Mark 8:34, Jesus says: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." According to accepted English dictionaries, "deny" means to refuse, reject, repudiate and/or to declare something untrue. If we limit ourselves to these definitions, we do an injustice to the deeper meaning of Christian self-denial. For a clearer picture of what Jesus means, we must return to the original Greek text. The Greek is "aparnisastho" and it has the meaning of renunciation and absolute rejection of whatever is incongruous with Jesus' planned salvation for us.

There are those of us who have a narrow and limited understanding of self-denial. We pick and choose at random what we will give up and what we will do in the name of Christianity. We proceed to label them "Our little crosses we must bear." "I'll give up movies and/or TV during lent." Thus we conclude with a list of trivialities that have no bearing on the "self-denial" Jesus speaks about in our gospel lesson for today. Christ-like self-denial goes much deeper. It penetrates the facade which hides our hidden sins, our shortcomings and our faults.

Utter denial does not mean depriving ourselves of the necessities of life, nor does it mean we must become paupers and live in rags. Neither does it mean we must lose our individuality, personality and identity. When Jesus speaks of total and utter denial of self, He means we must subordinate our clamoring ego that prohibits us from being the Children of God we were intended to be. Good intentions are not enough. This is why Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

"Take up your cross and follow me" means to get started on our journey to salvation. If the road we are on does not have God's Eternal Kingdom as its destination, then we had better make a U-turn and find the right one!

"Taking up our cross and following Jesus" means trying harder when those moments of calamity, tragedy, sorrow and loss and grief beset us. It means bringing under control our uncontrollable anger, our undue insensitivity, our impatience and impetuosity. It means subduing our temperament and disposition so that we can master them rather than their mastering us.

There is another reason this gospel passage is read at the Divine Liturgy of the Third Sunday of Lent. The Synaxarion, that portion of the Orthros service book which both announces and describes the observed Feast Day for today, says the following:

"On this the Third Sunday of Great Lent, we observe the Veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross and for this reason: Inasmuch as in the forty days of fasting we in a way crucify ourselves and become bitter, despondent and failing, the Life-giving Cross is presented to us for spiritual refreshment and assurance, for remembrance of our Lord's Passion and for comfort. Like those who are following a long and tedious path are tired, see a beautiful tree with many leaves, they would sit in its shade and rest for a while and then, as if rejuvenated, they will continue their journey. Likewise today, in the time of fasting and difficult journey and effort, the Life-giving Cross was planted in its midst by the Holy Fathers of the Church to give rest and spiritual refreshment, to make us light and courageous for the remaining task.

Christ comforts us who are, as it were, in a desert until He will lead us up to the spiritual Jerusalem by His Resurrection. Just as the Precious Cross, which is also called the Tree of Life, was planted in the middle of Paradise, so our Holy Fathers planted the Cross in the middle of holy and Great Lent, as a sacred reminder of both Adam's bliss and how he was deprived of it. Remembering also that by partaking of this Tree of Life, the Precious and Life-giving Cross, we no longer die but are kept alive."

St. John Chrysostom, a fourth century Patriarch of Constantinople describes the Cross this way: "The Cross is the proof of the love of God. The Cross is the unshaken wall, the unconquered weapon, the Kingdom of virtue. The Cross has torn asunder our mortgage and rendered useless the prison of death. The Cross has opened Paradise, it has admitted the thief and has guided the human race from impending disaster to the Kingdom of God."

Jesus extends His invitation to us once again to "deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him." Our Church gives us this Third Sunday of Lent—Mid-point to Golgotha—to pause with Jesus, to refresh ourselves spiritually, to assess our Lenten journey and to continue with greater determination. But the initiative is still ours. There is no way into spring but that we endure the rigors of winter. There is no way we can arrive to Easter Sunday if we do not live the agonies of all our Good Fridays. There is no way we can achieve eternal life with God unless we deny ourselves utterly and totally in Christ. This we do when we endure and sustain our own personal crosses and follow Him.