



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

SUNDAY
26 MARCH 2017
Volume 6—Issue 11
26/03—01/04/2017

PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 26 MARCH—1 APRIL 2017

SUNDAY 26 MARCH	Fourth Sunday of Lent, St John Climacus - Mark 9: 17-31 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
• SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES (A free voluntary program organised by the Church) 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.	
MONDAY 27 MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.• 6.00pm Service of Great Compline
TUESDAY 28 MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6.00pm Service of Great Compline• 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 29 MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8.00– 9.30am Service of Presanctified Liturgy• 6.00pm Service of Great Compline
THURSDAY 30 MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6.00pm Service of Small Compline and the Great Canon
FRIDAY 31 MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.00pm Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos
SATURDAY 1 APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3.45pm Service of Vespers



Telephone Contact Numbers

St Vasilios Church
9387 7693

Fr Athanasios
9383 4151

Fr Ephraim
0490 378 215

Website:
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

“Some people living carelessly in the world have asked me: ‘We have wives and are beset with social cares, and how can we lead the solitary life?’ I replied to them: ‘Do all the good you can; do not speak evil of anyone; do not steal from anyone; do not lie to anyone; do not be arrogant towards anyone; do not hate anyone; do not be absent from the divine services; be compassionate to the needy; do not offend anyone; do not wreck another man's domestic happiness, and be content with what your own wives can give you. If you behave in this way, you will not be far from the Kingdom of Heaven.’”

- St John Climacus, from *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, (Step 1, Section 21)

The Fourth Sunday of Lent—St John Climacus

What Does the Church Have to Say?

"Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit" (Mark 9:17-31)

Dear brethren, today's gospel reading tells us that a father brought his child to Christ to be cured of his sickness saying, "Master, I have brought my child. He suffers and is in pain. You are my last hope. Please make him well". Christ inquired how long the child had suffered. The father answered, "paedeothen" – that is, from childhood.

Today's sermon is about our children. The sermon is timely. It is very necessary because our children are, these days, near destruction. They face dangers from all directions. It is not my intention to repeat all the events and situations we all know and speak about. After all, as a popular proverb says, "a village in view needs towards it no guide". Everyone now relives the tragedies through newspapers, periodicals, radio, television, and by any other media.

What does the Church say concerning children? Or, rather, does the Church have the right to speak about children? We have received many letters from parents who read this column begging us to write something about children. The time has come to write, not to the children, but to the parents. Regarding the second question, we insist that the Church has all the right to speak about children.

What is the Church? It is the Great Mother of Christians which gives rebirth, feeds, and instructs (or pedagoges) the believer for and to salvation. St Basil the Great called the Church "Mother of all and the nurse". How come? The womb of the Church is the holy font where we regenerate ourselves and through it come into the world of true life. The Church is the nurse – *trophos* – which feeds us with Holy Communion. The Body and Blood of the Lord is the heavenly manna, the divine food that remains eternal. The divine word – *the kerygma* – is the "living water" which comes from the Holy Spirit, irrigating and watering the souls of men. It is the affectionate mother, the mother who covers, who loves, who warms, who becomes the consolation and balm for the sick, the naked and those who go astray.

But before the child goes to Church, he first goes home, to his parents. Children are not born like animals. We have two proofs of that. The first is from Scriptures; the difference in the creation of the animals and of man. The animals and the rest of the creatures were created through the order of God. As for man, God being especially concerned paid extraordinary attention in His creation. He first created the body and afterwards blew into him the breath of life.

"And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness...and the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 1:26-27). The second proof is from the natural birth. When an animal is born, it is armed and equipped with all the means to face life and natural enemies. Man is born naked and unable to face life alone, thereby in need of protection. Most of the animals live to the age of a young man, that is about twenty years, then they die leaving no trace. Man is born and he looks toward Heaven. His life does not end at the grave-stone, but continues in the bosom of eternal life. "God created man for incorruption", the Scriptures say. Animals have no meaning of the future and for this reason do not understand death and its meaning. They live for the moment and care for the moment. Man thinks. He remembers the past and from its experience builds the future. Until the infant can think, that is reaches maturity, he needs direct help and assistance.

First of all, he needs his mother's help, then afterwards his father's. There is no better picture in life and no more beautiful one than the picture of a mother who embraces her child in her arms and transplants, by her maternal milk, life and immortality to her child. The mother supplies him with food and the father begins to breed, groom and educate him. The Greek word for food is "*trophē*", and education is "*anatrophē*". The food – *trophē* – is concerned with development and bodily health of the child. The breeding – *anatrophē* – concerning the formation of the soul and the education of character is equally important. If the child lacks in health of his soul and in the formation of his character, having only strong muscles, he becomes a wild beast, who lives not in a forest, but in a city. We have many such young people today, who burn banks, homes, overturn cars, kill and do other evil things. They are healthy in body, but sick in character.

The parents direct their interests only as to how their children will be strong bodily. Therefore, the parents are the initiative sources of the child's progress. This, St Gregory of Nyssa, from his personal family experience, had in mind when he said, "From the family's hearth men take the fire of holiness, and the home is the workshop of virtue". St Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "You are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). If all the Christians are the edifice of God, young age is the foundation of the whole building. No architect, engineer or logical man constructs a building on a decayed foundation, because with the first rattling, the edifice or building falls; "and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7:24-27). The foundation of the building is Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ".

Faith to God is first. We must teach our children, *not* how to become materially rich, but how to become good men – not "*efporoi*" (rich), but "*eftropoi*", with good manners. The example of parents is the greatest teacher. The small children not only accept and learn what they hear, but what they see is imprinted in their minds also and they imitate likewise.

After his family life, a child enters church life. We cannot say anything about American school life, because even that typical and dry prayer was thrown out from public schools. According to the expression of a moralist, the school has become a focal point of revolution and of anarchy. The student has ceased to be a person, but rather a number. There is no personal interest for the student. Children of the first and second grade smoke without any shame in front of their teachers, that is, teachers who are unbalanced and without moral foundations. For this reason the Church's responsibility is doubled.

The priest is a priest, but he is also the teacher of religion. What did the father in today's gospel do? He took his sick child and brought him to Jesus Christ. The parents of today's society should do the same, leading their children to the Church. The Church is a private clinic and a sanatorium without salary. It happens that when a child goes to church a conversion and some kind of alteration takes place by the right hand of the Highest. A child goes into the Church and leaves as another. The Church is the treasury of divine grace that she grants to her children through her sacraments. The parents who bring their children to the "courts of the Lord" are blessed, while the parents who do not are unfortunate, and their children still more unfortunate. Instead of leading their children to church every Sunday, the parents lead them to other places. Such parents will mourn tomorrow because their negligence to their children, and their mourning will be too late.

We have to understand once and for all that children without Christ are available or susceptible to any kind of crime. Therefore, it still remains for you to bring your children to the Church, exactly as the father in the gospel brought his child to Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rev. George Dimopoulos, *Orthodox Sermons*, Greek Orthodox Church of America