



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

SUNDAY
30 APRIL 2017
Volume 6—Issue 14
30/04—06/05/2017

PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 30 APRIL—6 MAY 2017

ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ! CHRIST IS ARISEN!

SUNDAY 30 APRIL <i>Apostle James, Bishop</i>	Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-bearers, - Mark 15: 43—16:8 • 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 1 MAY	• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
TUESDAY 2 MAY <i>Translation of Relics of St Athanasius the Great</i>	• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy • 7.00pm 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. • 7.30pm Young Adults and Married Couples Bible Study Group at St. Vasilios, —in downstairs building behind the Church.
WEDNESDAY 3 MAY	• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
FRIDAY 5 MAY <i>St Irene, Great-Martyr</i>	• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SATURDAY 6 MAY	• 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

St Joseph of Arimathea, who buried the crucified Christ. The holy and righteous **Joseph of Arimathea** was a wealthy member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and a secret follower of Christ (Matt. 27:25; John 19:38). His feast day is July 31. He is also commemorated on the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearers—the second Sunday after Pascha. Along with St. Nicodemus, St. Joseph removed Christ's body from the Cross, prepared it for burial, and placed it in his own sepulchre. Jewish spies found out about this and told their authorities, who imprisoned St. Joseph. However, the resurrected Christ appeared to St. Joseph in prison and convinced him of his Resurrection. Some time later the Jews released St. Joseph from prison and banished him from Jerusalem. He then travelled throughout the whole world preaching the Gospel, eventually sowing the seeds of salvation in Britain, where he reposed peacefully in the Lord.

Nicodemus the Righteous The holy and righteous **Nicodemus** was a Pharisee who came to hear the Lord by night. After the Crucifixion, he acted as one of the Holy Myrrh-bearers. Because of this, he is commemorated on the Sunday of Myrrh-bearing Women, two weeks after Pascha. In the Gospel of John, he appears three times. The first is the aforementioned encounter, where he visits Jesus in the dead of the night (in order to avoid persecution by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish temple leaders, of which he was a member) to listen to his teachings (John 3:1-21). This meeting, a poignant scene in the Gospel, is where Jesus tells Nicodemus that one must be "born again" in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. The second appearance is in John 7:45-51, where he states the law concerning the arrest of Jesus at the Feast of Booths. Finally, his last appearance is after the Crucifixion where he assists the Noble Joseph in recovering Jesus' body and preparing it for burial (John 19:39-42).

Not much is known outside of John's Gospel regarding the life of St. Nicodemus after the Resurrection. Church tradition states that he was possibly martyred sometime during the 1st Century AD.

Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-bearers, - Mark 15: 43—16:8

Contemporary Tombs

‘God is dead!’ This is the infamous proclamation of the 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Certainly, this same thought must have crossed the minds of the Myrrhbearing women, whom we read about in today’s gospel reading (Mark 15:43-16:8; Third Sunday of Pascha), as they went to anoint the body of Jesus after His death and burial. The Messiah, our God is dead! One Nietzsche’s proofs, of God being dead, he said, was the churches. In other words, there was no evidence of Divine life nor of belief in the Divine in the churches of Europe at that time. The reality may still be occurring during our time, the 21st century. We modern Christians may be burying Christ in a tomb in this day and age. How?

Well, the Church itself can become a tomb when we leave Jesus there after Liturgy. It’s as if we say, ‘Goodbye Christ, see you next Sunday.’ We venerate, kiss and adore the beautiful icons of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary Theotokos and the Saints, but then we forget that each and every person is an icon, created in the image and likeness of God, worthy of the same respect, veneration and adoration. So, instead, we regularly criticize each other, and gossip about one another, and sometimes just ignore each other. God is dead!

The Mysteries and Sacraments can become tombs when we only receive Holy Communion once or twice a year and when we participate in Holy Confession once or twice in a lifetime. Even if we do receive the Eucharist and Confession frequently, if it is merely out of habit or custom without proper preparation, and without demonstrable positive changes, then we still bury Christ in them.

Extending in the direction from the Church to our own life, is the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Pisteuo, a tomb for Christ? In other words, does ‘I believe..’, my faith, have anything to do with my actions? Do I consider God and His will in my daily decisions? Do I take my orders from Him in my business, fellowship and family relationships? Is our Christian faith just a philosophical proposition or is it a way of life? God is dead!

The Bible can become a tomb for Christ if we never open to let Christ mystically arise and speak to us from the pages into our hearts and minds as we read the sacred Scriptures. The Old and New Testaments can become tombs if we don’t read them with faith, as if they are strictly literature or history writings.

Our heart can become a tomb when we say things like, ‘I don’t need to come to Church, I have Christ in my heart.’ The reality is that is where He will stay, buried when we don’t support the church, its ministries and its people with our time, talents and treasures. God is dead!

Our life can become a tomb for Christ when we bury Him under our many sins, our ignorance or indifference and our bad habits. This will happen if we keep piling it on without sincere repentance and true resolve to change. Our life is still a tomb if we are fair-weather fans of faith, participating only when it’s convenient, when things are going well, or when we feel ‘moved’ or ‘inspired’ to do so. Orthodox spiritual life is not based on emotions or feelings. Asceticism is all about doing what is right, necessary and true, even when we don’t feel like it.

Is God really dead? Of course not. He is very much alive just as the angel announced to the Myrrh-bearing women, ‘He is risen! He is not here’ (Mk.16:6). Part of experiencing the very much alive, risen Christ has to do with courage and resolve. The Myrrh-bearers, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, ministered to the crucified Christ at great risk to themselves. If the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities just killed the sinless Messiah, who was to say that they or their angry, jealous mob of followers wouldn’t do the same to the people we commemorate today?

We must have courage and resolve too. We don’t live in a time of severe persecution like the early Christians. So, why do we act like we do? The angel commanded the myrrh-bearers to share the news and joy of Christ’s resurrection (Mk.16:7). Do we joyfully and boldly proclaim His resurrection at this time of year, the forty days after Pascha? The Divine Liturgy is the work of the people. It is the lifting up of our hearts and minds to the risen and ascended Christ. The work that we do does not end when the worship ends. We need only remember that Christ did not stay on the mountain after His Transfiguration. He then descended back down to the plain of human illness and the valley of evil to the Crucifixion in order to be raised again.

Remember, the Myrrh-bearers did not roll away the stone from the door of the tomb. It was done for them. And it was done not to let Christ out of the tomb but rather to reveal to the Myrrh-bearers that Christ had already risen. We cannot move the heavy stones of sin, ignorance or indifference from our life. Only God can do that. But He will only do it if we come to His tomb, ready to be crucified with Him, ready and willing to stop clutching these familiar stones so that we too may be raised with Him. Amen!