



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

SUNDAY
16 JULY 2017
Volume 6—Issue 25
16/07—22/07/2017

PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 16—22 JULY 2017

SUNDAY 16 JULY	Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the 4th Council - MATTHEW 5: 14-19 <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 17 JULY <i>St Marina, Great-Martyr</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
TUESDAY 18 JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 at St. Vasilios, in the Church Coffee Room.
WEDNESDAY 19 JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study.
THURSDAY 20 JULY <i>Glorious Prophet Elijah the Tishbite</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SATURDAY 22 JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3.45pm Service of Vespers
SUNDAY 23 JULY	GOSPEL READING: MATTHEW 9: 27-35 EPISTLE READING: ROMANS 15: 1-7



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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.

"You Are the Light of the World" : Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the 4th Ecumenical Council

We do a lot with lights in our church. There are candles on the altar and in front of icons. We turn up the lights at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, and "Come Receive the Light" is the high point of the Pascha service when the light of our Lord's resurrection shines in the darkness and spreads from the priest's candle to everyone in the church.

So we shouldn't be surprised that Christ told His followers that they were to be the light of the world, a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. Imagine driving in the countryside at night, you will see the lights of even a small town from quite a distance; when light shines in the darkness, it is very hard to hide. And we never turn on light in order to hide something; instead, we want to illumine it so that we can see it clearly.

The good news of our faith is that Christ has brought the light of heaven to our darkened world. Indeed, He is the Light, the eternal Son of God who becomes fully human while remaining fully divine. That's how He brings us into His light, how He makes it possible for us to shine with His holy glory even as we live and breathe upon the earth. He fulfils all the foreshadowing and preparation of the Law and the Prophets, for God was never primarily concerned with Old Testament rules about outward behaviour or the sacrifice of animals. Instead, those rules pointed the way to the true Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, to the One who triumphs over sin and death themselves. And now He makes it possible for us all to share in His glorious, brilliant light, to become partakers of His divinity by grace.

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Today we remember the 630 holy and God-bearing fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon in the year 451. They made clear this very point: that Christ is fully God and fully human: one Person with two natures, for if He were not, how could He save us who are fully human? They rejected the views of the Monophysites who claimed the Lord has only one nature, a divine one. If that were the case, we could not participate in His divine life—for we are simply humans—and it would be hard to see how Christ's death and resurrection had much to do with us. So today's commemoration is not simply a reminder about ancient history; it is a proclamation of the Gospel, for Jesus Christ must be both God and man in order to be our Saviour.

Yes, the good news is that we are called to become radiant and illuminated by the light of Christ such that we become the light of the world, shining so brightly with good works that all will give glory to God. The point is not to relax the laws of the Old Testament, but to bring their purpose to completion. In other words, it's not enough to refrain from murder; we are to overcome the passion of anger, which is at the root of murder. It's not sufficient to avoid the physical act of adultery; we are instead to be free from bondage to lust in all its forms. Instead of getting back at our enemies in accordance with "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," we are to turn the other cheek, blessing them with the same love that we have received from the Lord. The ultimate goal of these commandments is our perfection, "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." If we ourselves lived that way, imagine what a blessing we would be to the world, for we would be living proof that human beings may become part-takers of the divine nature in Him.

Well, most of us aren't there yet, but the fundamental good news of the gospel remains: The God-Man Jesus Christ is our perfection, our salvation, our *theosis*. He has already worked the unfathomable miracle of joining humanity to divinity, of conquering sin and death, of making us participants in His life. Our on-going task is to cooperate with Him, to open the dark corners of our lives to His light, to stop corrupting and diminishing ourselves and instead to start living as the icons of divine glory that we were created to be.

And in order to make progress in the Christian life, we need our Church, which speaks the truth about how we participate in this great salvation—not as an emotional experience, a one-time event, or a reward for good behaviour— but as members of a living Body in which our passions are healed, our hearts are purified, and our souls are illumined as we grow in union with Christ and one another. Any relationship is a process, a journey, and a relationship of communion with the Holy Trinity is no exception. By God's grace, we hope to grow in holiness throughout eternity. We may put no limits on what it means for us as creatures to share in the life of the Creator.

And perhaps that's why the Lord sets the standard so high. Those who are great in the Kingdom of Heaven are not the ones who break God's laws and teach others to follow their bad example, those who teach and live out a low standard. They are not those who bring confusion and division into the Church. No, they are those who keep God's commands and teach others to do so as they shine every more brightly with light.

You know, it's unfortunately always been easy to find religious groups that don't shine with light all, who sound just like the one St. Paul addressed in his letter to St. Titus. Apparently, some people preferred to spend their time in foolish, unprofitable, and useless arguments which led to nothing but division in the church. St. Paul teaches that it is much better to use such wasted time and energy in actually doing good works, meeting the urgent needs of people, and bearing fruit for the Kingdom. In other words, it is better to focus on living the basic Christian life than it is to distract ourselves with nonsense.

If Jesus Christ had been just another rabbi, then it wouldn't have mattered if people argued on and on about His teachings and lived as they pleased. But that is not our faith. Jesus Christ is truly God and truly human, the Risen Lord in whom we share in the life eternal of heaven. He is the true Light "never overtaken by night" who calls us to become the light of the world, to manifest the glory of His salvation in even the small details of our lives. There are no secret mysteries or hidden teachings that require endless debate, for Christ did not come to save a few select philosophers. There is no code for figuring out when He will return or for identifying people we don't like as the Antichrist and other such craziness. And there is no reason for each succeeding generation to attempt to redefine basic Christian teaching about theology and morality in light of what's popular or easy in their particular time and place.

Christ has brought light and life to all, to the entire world, and in His Body, the Church, we all learn how to grow in relationship with Him. Basically, if we actually do what we know we should be doing, we will grow in holiness. That means simple steps, such as: coming to church; receiving the Holy Mysteries with proper preparation; praying, fasting, and taking confession on a regular basis; repenting of any wrong that we do; giving to the needy and for the support of the church; forgiving those who have wronged us and asking forgiveness of those we have wronged; fighting our passions; being mindful, which means to watch our thoughts, our mouth, and whatever else we have trouble controlling. Like St. Paul said, we should focus our energy on living the basic Christian life and we will find that we have much less time for pointless disputes and other spiritually unhealthy endeavours. Do all of this with sincere faith, hope, and love, and you will grow in Christ and be a light and blessing to the world.

But don't be surprised if you still don't glow in the dark, at least not in your own eyes. Truly holy people don't think that they are holy at all. In contrast with the brilliant light of the Lord, they see their own dark spots with greater clarity than the rest of us see ours. The closer we are to the Lord, the more aware we will be of how far we have to go to be perfect as He is perfect.

So if you are aware of more darkness than light in you at the moment, don't be surprised and don't despair. Do what you can to welcome the light that is in you, no matter how dim it appears; focus on it, fuel it, do everything within your power to help it grow and overtake the night. Our Lord has conquered the darkness of death, the tomb, and hades; and He wants to do the same in our lives—and He will, if we will continue the process of growing in union with Him; and as we do our good works and our personal transformation will bring at least a glimpse of the glory of heaven to earth. And that's a good thing because it is our calling: to be the light of the world so that others will glorify God and be drawn to the new life of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ. For He is truly the light that shines in the darkness, illuminating even people like you and me.

- Fr. Philip LeMasters, *Eastern Christian Insights*