



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 12—18 NOVEMBER 2017

SUNDAY 12 NOVEMBER <i>St John the Merciful</i>	8th Sunday of Luke, Luke 10: 25-37 <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 13 NOVEMBER <i>St John Chrysostom</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
TUESDAY 14 NOVEMBER <i>Apostle, St Philip</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.
WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER <i>Nativity Fast Begins</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
SATURDAY 18 NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3.45pm Service of Vespers
SUNDAY 19 NOVEMBER	GOSPEL READING: Luke 12: 16-21 EPISTLE READING: Eph. 2: 14-22



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Fr. Athanasios
and
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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.

THE CHILDREN'S WORD Presvytera Alexandra Houck, myocn.

What's the first Bible story you ever heard? Maybe it was the parable of the Good Samaritan. Do you remember the story? A man was on a trip, and some robbers beat him up, stole his things, and left him there. Two people went by—and they were people you'd expect to help— but they ignored him. Finally a third person came. Even though he was a foreigner and a stranger from Samaria, he did everything he could to help the poor, beaten-up man. This Samaritan saved his life!

Do you know your neighbours? Sometimes we do, and sometimes we might not. In the story today, Jesus tells somebody to, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself"! The man answered Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

Yes, who **are** our neighbours? Our neighbour is anybody we run into during the day. Sometimes we expect to run into somebody who needs our help, like a friend at school who always asks you for help. Sometimes it's a surprise! But God wants us to be like the Good Samaritan. He wants us to help anybody who comes our way. Sometimes we help by praying for somebody. Sometimes we help by giving money or food. Sometimes we help by giving somebody our time. When somebody needs our help, let's ask God to show us the best way. Can you remember that?

Homily on the Good Samaritan - Luke 10: 25-37

Here, on the doorstep of the Nativity Fast—yes, that's right, we're beginning the journey to the Holy Nativity this Friday—we're given the opportunity to renew and deepen our life in Christ, to grow in our love of God and neighbor, and strengthen our commitment to living out the Gospel—to "go and do likewise." Christ gives us today the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

In the West, this holy season is called "Advent," meaning "the coming." This title refers to the coming of the Messiah foretold by the prophets and culminating in the miraculous virgin birth we celebrate at the Nativity six weeks from now. But it also refers to the a second advent, or coming—that of Christ God's Second Coming when He will judge the living and the dead and gather all His faithful who know Him into His near presence.

In the Orthodox Church our Nativity Fast is longer than that in the West, which is just four weeks. For us, Advent constitutes a mini-Lent. And while less strict in the observances to which we are called than Lent and more 'joyous' in tone (it's goal is not Passion Week but the Incarnation), it's an ascetic preparation that equips us to more fully participate in what the Incarnation of our Lord, God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ means for us.

We're given a gift in having the Parable of the Good Samaritan thrust in our faces just before we begin the Fast so we may begin now to put its lessons into practice and arrive at the Feast of the Nativity that much stronger in our faith and practice at the celebration of His holy birth.

Christ gives us this parable in response to a question put to Him as a test by a lawyer: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Now, people are putting Christ to the test all the time, asking questions like, "Why do I have it so tough? Why do I pray and (so it seems to me) nothing happens? Why do I not get what I want, what I asked for? Why does that person seem to have it so much 'easier' than I do?"

But all such questions are, in reality, also an 'opportunity': if we recognize what's behind such questions, to make them into a cry for help from God: an admittance of lack of faith is a cry for more; a recognition of ego-centricism becomes a prayer for increased focus on Christ, of praying for others to get our focus off ourselves and the problems we often create for ourselves by turning inward instead of turning to our Saviour, the only One who can really help us.

In the case of the lawyer, Jesus aids him in coming to see his own pridefulness; He helps him to gain humility by asking the lawyer a question in return: "what's written in the Law?" In response, the lawyer quotes from Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus affirms his answer, but in his pridefulness, the lawyer's still not satisfied: he's still hoping to stump Jesus so he asks Him yet another question: "And who is my neighbor?"

The parable of the Good Samaritan is Jesus' final response. But Jesus turns the lawyer's question on its head: instead of answering the question, "who is my neighbour?" Jesus shows the lawyer what it means to be a godly neighbor, and, He calls on all of us to do likewise.

Jesus teaches us throughout the Gospels to prioritize those people we meet who are in need, both physically and spiritually. In fact, the two are inseparable in the Gospels. Now, this is not some 'social gospel' that Christ is teaching, which generally ministers exclusively to the physical and temporal aspects of need. The priority with Christ is always on a person's immortal soul, on their finding life in Him, repentance from their sins, which, if left unrepented of, would keep them from being able to be in His holy presence and find healing and glory for their souls.

An African proverb says, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." I like that proverb, but we can put an Orthodox twist on it that strengthens it further: feed a man for a day and you aid his temporal body; bring a man to Christ and His Church and you feed his soul for eternity. In other words, bring a person to the Church and Christ gives him the tools he needs to address his greatest needs—even physical needs as the two are intricately connected. Bring such a man to the Church and Christ feeds his soul while also providing him with a family to love him and help care for him, challenge him and encourage him, love him—body and soul, coming to know Him who is Eternal Life.

The fact is though that someone lying on the side of the road, beaten and bloody cannot escape our notice, but the spiritual needs of those 'storm-tossed' by our culture, ravaged by the 'thieves' of the truth: secularism and nihilism, and all godlessness, is something so ubiquitous, we can easily find ourselves numb to their need and suffering. We can easily find ourselves just like that priest and Levite, who pass by indifferent to the needs of the dying souls around us.

The goodness of the Samaritan can be summed up in one word, "mercy." He showed mercy on the man who fell among robbers. Mercy and love are very closely related. Mercy and love, when they've taken root in us through Christ, produce compassion and overcome indifference.

Some of the Fathers interpret the Good Samaritan to be a figure of Christ Himself: the bandages, oil and wine are sacramental images for the clothing of the neophyte at Baptism in a garment of white, signifying new birth, which heals us of the wounds of sin, the oil of Chrismation, gives us new life going forward in the Holy Spirit by whom we are sealed, the wine, which is the communion of the divine Blood of Christ, deifies us and leads us to eternal life with Christ God.

St. John Chrysostom says of the moral of this Parable, "Let us make our mercifulness abundant, let us give proof of much love to man, both by the use of our money, and by our actions." Yes, this is part of it." During the Fast, we focus even more on giving alms, giving to the Church, and serving with our gifts because it's an opportunity to grow in mercy and compassion. But it's easier to give money to a cause we believe in. When we see Christ tangibly ministering to our needs or those of others, we naturally want to support and further that work. But St. John urges us beyond what is easy, however, saying, "Go then, and put a stop to the evil; pull out those who are drowning, though you descend into the very depth of the surge..." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily XV on Matthew 5:14).

Now here's a challenge to us: do we love enough to address with the love and truth of Christ the evil we see harming those around us? Are we willing to go that extra mile and really address the core issues in our own life, so we too can become an inspiration, an example, and a vehicle through which God can work in the lives of those around us?

We don't have to be already healed to minister to others; we do need, however, to be healLING. In other words, we have to be taking our spiritual medicine if we're going to have credibility with others whom we urge to do the same. We need to fight to make use of the tools of salvation Christ gives us if we're to impact the world and the people around us with the Gospel of Christ.

When we come outside ourselves, our own struggles and problems to love and care for those around us in body and in soul, when we really strive to love and serve, when we speak the Truth to those who need to hear it by authentically struggling to live that Truth—where else are they going to hear it if not from us in the Church—then we're assured that God will always supply in us what is lacking; He'll use such opportunities to work in us and through us.

Having finished His parable, Jesus asks the lawyer, "which of these was a neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?" And the lawyer responds, "he who showed mercy." Christ says, "Go and do the same." Pray to God for such opportunities to be used; pray for eyes of mercy. He who is Himself the Good Samaritan and calls on us to be the same, will give them to us!

- Fr. Robert Miclean