



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

SUNDAY
26 NOVEMBER 2017
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PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 26 NOVEMBER—2 DECEMBER 2017

SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER <i>St Stylianos of Paphlagonia</i>	13th Sunday of Luke, Luke 18: 18-27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
<p>• 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.</p>	
MONDAY 27 NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
TUESDAY 28 NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.00pm Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord, Coburg Youth Group will meet in the Coburg Hall. The meeting will begin with the Compline Service in English.
WEDNESDAY 29 NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
THURSDAY 30 NOVEMBER <i>Apostle Andrew the First-Called</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SATURDAY 2 DECEMBER <i>St Porphyrios Kafsokalyvites</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy • 3.45pm Service of Vespers
SUNDAY 3 DECEMBER	GOSPEL READING: Luke 18: 35-43 EPISTLE READING: Eph. 5: 8-19



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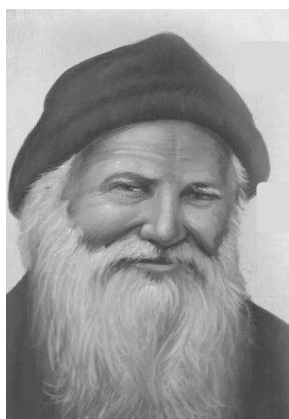
Website:
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Fr. Athanasios
and
Fr. Ephraim

are available
at the Church

every Monday to Friday
between
4.00 and 6.00pm

for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.



A person can become a saint anywhere ...
At your work, whatever it may be,
you can become a saint through meekness,
patience, and love.
Make a new start every day, with new
resolution, enthusiasm and love, prayer and silence.
- St Porphyrios

One Thing You Still Lack

I was speaking to a college student recently about computer programming. He lamented the extreme detail required to write and edit code. Code is the programming language used to write software that tells computers how to process and display data. Code is in almost every electronic device that we use today. When you look at code it often does not resemble human language. It looks more like just a jumble of random words, letters and characters. Highly sophisticated programs contain thousands, if not millions of lines of coding. The reason extreme care and attention to detail is required to write and edit code is because if just one period or comma is out of place, the whole program could fail and render the software and/or the hardware useless. This is kind of the same principle Jesus applies to the rich young ruler in today's Gospel reading from the 13th Sunday of Luke (18:18-27). When the Rich Young Ruler asks Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (v.18), Jesus responds with several of the Ten Commandments (v.20). The young man responds that he has kept them (v.21). Jesus then tells him, "One thing you still lack" (v.22). In other words, "there is still a piece of the code you are missing and without it you cannot inherit everlasting life in heaven." Before we talk about that one thing lacking, let us confront Jesus' approach to this problem.

Some might say that Jesus is being too strict here. The rich young ruler is a good person but Jesus is going to exclude him from heaven because of one thing he is missing. Why would Jesus condemn a person for one thing they lack? Well, Fr. Anthony Coniaris in his sermon "One Thing You Still Lack" (Gems from Sunday Gospels vol.2, p.84) helps us understand by comparing the two ancient Greek philosophers, Socrates and Plato. Socrates claimed that a person was morally acceptable if the evil deeds in his life were balanced by the good deeds. Plato, on the other hand, disagreed completely with Socrates. He taught that personality, like a chain, is only as strong as its weakest link. The ladder that lacks a rung or two is a useless thing, and a boat may sink if it has one small hole in its hull. Our Lord is Platonic. He is not at all Socratic. He says that one thing can make a difference between life and death. One sin can ruin an otherwise moral life. One weak link in the chain of our life can jeopardize our salvation. Jesus emphasizes this point in His Sermon on the Mount from Gospel of Matthew:

17"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-19) Later, in the same chapter, Jesus says, 48Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

The Apostle James confirms this in his Epistle:

10For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 11For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. (James 2:10-11) Now if this is true, what hope do we have? Surely, all of us will be shut out of the Kingdom of Heaven! Yes, Satan wants us to believe that we have no hope. He wants to rob us of any hope whatsoever, because without hope we are totally lost. The disciples were worried about this when they asked Jesus at the end of today's Gospel, "Who then can be saved?" (v.26). How did Jesus answer? He told them, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (v.27). So, instead of losing hope, we must throw our whole selves completely into the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only then, based on His love and forgiveness, can we begin to find out what is still lacking in our journey towards salvation. Yet, we have a difficult time with "committing ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God" (petition from worship services). We will come back to this shortly.

Returning to the rich young ruler, what was the one thing that kept him away from eternal life? It was his possessions, his wealth, his money. Even though he had fulfilled many, if not most of the commandments, he violated the first commandment, "Thou shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). The passage relates that he became very sorrowful for he had great possessions (v.23). Now, as Fr. Coniaris says, Jesus is the Good Physician, and as such he does not prescribe the same medication for every patient. Thus, the Lord may not ask us to sell all our possessions and give the proceeds to the poor, but He does give us the command to tithe as an antidote to greed and avarice. Yet, if we cannot manage to give even one percent to the Lord, are we not also lacking that one thing in order to inherit eternal life? As the Physician of our souls and bodies, Jesus is also the Good Surgeon who can diagnose and remove any tumor that threatens our spiritual health. If our medical doctor told us, "You have a cancerous tumor in your kidney but it is so invasive that we'll need to remove the whole kidney," would we do it? Would we have the surgery? Probably, because we know that we can live with only one kidney and we do not want to risk the cancer spreading to other parts of our body. The Lord Jesus makes the same analogy when it comes to our spiritual health.

29If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matthew 5:29-30) So, if the Lord is telling us that we can keep 90% of our income and wealth but that we need to cut off or cut away ten percent with a tithe to Him, is this not the same principle? And how do we respond to the priest or the parish when we ask for a tithe? Do we become very sorrowful? Or do we become angry? Or do we become uncomfortable? Or do we blow it off? All of these responses are signs that we still lack at least one thing to inherit eternal life.

How serious is our relationship to our income and wealth? Jesus noticed the rich young ruler's sad response. 24And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (vv.24-25)

Some of us may respond by saying, "I'm not rich, this does not apply to me." The problem is that we do not trust God and we want to hold back something extra for ourselves because we believe that we cannot live (or live as comfortably) without it. As Fr. Coniaris relates, that one thing we still lack is like a certain room in our house that we do not want God to enter. We keep the door shut and locked. For some of us it is wealth, for others it is ambition, sexual behavior, or hatred. "God, you can have everything, but not this one thing! You can enter any room of my house, but not this one!" By doing this we make an idol of that one department of our life. Putting it in the words of the Apostle Paul from Ephesians 5:8-19, that one room that God cannot enter is in secrecy and darkness. The only way light can enter is to open the door. This is what the Sacrament of Confession is all about. Opening the door to the dark rooms of our life so that the light of Christ can shine inside and the fresh air of the Holy Spirit can enter therein. This is true healing and forgiveness.

As we conclude today, Fr. Anthony notes that the rich young ruler thought God belonged in the synagogue only, that He had no business to be in the world of finance. But Jesus insisted that God belongs in every department of our life. Fr. Anthony also raises the question, what if the rich young ruler had sold all and followed Christ? He might be honored today as one of the Apostles or Saints. Yet, because he loved his money more than God, he refused Jesus' invitation and now even his name is lost to history.

What is that one thing we still lack in our life? Is it some sin we refuse to let go? Is it some part of our life we refuse to surrender to God? Is it some love we place above our love for Christ? Is it some person we refuse to forgive? Remember, that one thing can keep us out of the kingdom of heaven. Amen!