



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

SUNDAY
14 JANUARY 2018
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PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 14—20 JANUARY 2018

SUNDAY 14 JANUARY	Sunday after Epiphany, Matthew 4: 12-17 • 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY <i>St Anthony the Great</i>	• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
THURSDAY 18 JANUARY <i>St Athanasius and Cyril</i> <i>(Patriarchs of Alexandria)</i>	• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SATURDAY 20 JANUARY <i>St Euthimios the Great</i>	• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy • 3.45pm Service of Vespers
SUNDAY 21 JANUARY	GOSPEL READING: Luke 19: 1-10 EPISTLE READING: 1 Timothy 4:10-15



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

“Learn to love humility, for it will cover all your sins. All sins are repulsive before God, but the most repulsive of all is pride of the heart. Do not consider yourself learned and wise; otherwise, all your efforts will be destroyed, and your boat will reach the harbor empty. If you have great authority, do not threaten anyone with death. Know that, according to nature, you too are susceptible to death, and that every soul sheds its body as its final garment.”
— St. Anthony the Great

Why are Vigil Lamps Lit Before Icons?

1. Because our faith is light. Christ said: I am the light of the world (John 8:12). The light of the vigil lamp reminds us of that light by which Christ illumines our souls.
 2. In order to remind us of the radiant character of the saint before whose icon we light the vigil lamp, for saints are called sons of light (John 12:36, Luke 16:8).
 3. In order to serve as a reproach to us for our dark deeds, for our evil thoughts and desires, and in order to call us to the path of evangelical light; and so that we would more zealously try to fulfill the commandments of the Saviour: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works” (Matt. 5:16).
 4. So that the vigil lamp would be our small sacrifice to God, Who gave Himself completely as a sacrifice for us, and as a small sign of our great gratitude and radiant love for Him from Whom we ask in prayer for life, and health, and salvation and everything that only boundless heavenly love can bestow.
 5. So that terror would strike the evil powers who sometimes assail us even at the time of prayer and lead away our thoughts from the Creator. The evil powers love the darkness and tremble at every light, especially at that which belongs to God and to those who please Him.
 6. So that this light would rouse us to selflessness. Just as the oil and wick burn in the vigil lamp, submissive to our will, so let our souls also burn with the flame of love in all our sufferings, always being submissive to God’s will.
 7. In order to teach us that just as the vigil lamp cannot be lit without our hand, so too, our heart, our inward vigil lamp, cannot be lit without the holy fire of God’s grace, even if it were to be filled with all the virtues. All these virtues of ours are, after all, like combustible material, but the fire which ignites them proceeds from God.
 8. In order to remind us that before anything else the Creator of the world created light, and after that everything else in order: And God said, let there be light: and there was light (Genesis 1:3). And it must be so also at the beginning of our spiritual life, so that before anything else the light of Christ’s truth would shine within us. From this light of Christ’s truth subsequently every good is created, springs up and grows in us. May the Light of Christ illumine you as well!
- St. Nikolai Velimirovich

Sunday after Epiphany (Matthew 4:12-17) Feast of Lights

Last week we talked about the power of the Holy Spirit. We also mentioned the power of electricity. Electricity is what gives us light when it is dark. In the natural world, light is like water. It is one of our basic necessities. Without the light of the sun, nothing would grow. We would have no plants and therefore, we would have no food. When it is cloudy all day, we humans may become a little melancholy. When it's cloudy for several days, we can get downright ornery and depressed. Our bodies need light. Without it we produce less serotonin, a internal biochemical that soothes us and makes us happy. It is no wonder that primitive people worshipped the sun and the stars that were the main sources of light in ancient times.

Even more important than the physical light of the sun (o elios) however, is the metaphysical light of the Son (o yios) of God. In today's Gospel reading, from the Sunday after Theophany (Matthew 4:12-17), we hear the Evangelist quoting Isaiah about Jesus leaving Nazareth after John the Baptist was put in prison: ¹⁵*"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: **¹⁶The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death; Light has dawned.**"* [vv.15-16; Isaiah 9:1-2]. The light, of course, is referring to Christ. The Light of Christ dawned at His Nativity, at the Feast of Theophany on January 6th it is fully revealed, and it will reach its zenith at the Resurrection.

The prominent theme of light is why Theophany/Epiphany is known in Greek as Ta Phota or Ton Foton, aka "The Feast of Lights." In the prayer to bless the waters on Theophany, Patriarch Sophronius wrote, *"Today we have escaped from darkness, and by the **light** of the knowledge of God we have been illuminated."* Christ would later say about Himself: *"**I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life**"* (John 8:12). In the Pistevo/Creed, we confess that Christ is "Phos ek Photos" or "Light of Light."

The foundational scriptural passage about the Light of Christ is from the Prologue of the Gospel of John that is read at the midnight Liturgy of Pascha.

¹In the beginning was **the Word**, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴**In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.** ⁵And the **light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷This man came for a witness, to bear witness of **the Light**, that all through him might believe. ⁸He was **not** that Light, but was **sent to bear witness** of that Light. ⁹That was the **true Light** which **gives light to every man** coming into the world" (John 1:1-9).

Jesus is the true Light that gives light to each one of us. In addition to Theophany (Jan.6th), light plays a prominent role in several Feasts of the Church. The Star of Bethlehem guides the shepherds and wise men to the Christ-child after His nativity (Dec.25th). During His Transfiguration (Aug.6th) on Mount Tabor, when Christ revealed His divine nature to Peter, James and John, His face shined like the Sun and His garments appeared white as light (ref.?). The Myrrh-bearing Women discovered Jesus' Resurrection at early dawn when the Sun was rising (ref.?). At Pentecost, after Jesus' Ascension to sit at the right hand of the Father, He sent His Holy Spirit upon the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues (ref.?).

No wonder we pray during the Liturgy right before the Gospel reading, *"Shine within our hearts loving Master the pure **light** of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our mind to comprehend Your Gospel."*

Orthodox Churches are designed and decorated in a manner to emphasize the light of Christ. The worshippers face the East where the Sun rises. Windows are used in such a way to allow a generous portion of light in without revealing its source, thereby avoiding unnecessary focus on natural light but using it to emphasize the supernatural light of Christ. Mosaic glass and gold leaf are employed in order to reflect light. And of course, candles and oil lamps are also incorporated to illuminate the sacred persons depicted in the holy icons.

Returning to today's Gospel passage, it says that the inhabitants of Zebulun and Naphtali were a people who sat in darkness. We too also sit in darkness. Why? How? If the light of Christ has dawned, why do we sit in darkness? It is because we turn away from the light—just as Judas walked out of the light of the Upper Room into the darkness of the night (John 13:30). We are confronted with this darkness as soon as we turn away from the true source of our being—God Himself—and try to finding meaning elsewhere. In his sermon, Fr. Anthony Coniaris- Light Has Dawned (My Beloved Son, vol.2, p.137), shares the following from St. John Chrysostom, *"It is the simplest thing in the world to shut out the sun, just close your eyelids! Light is all about you, but you have chosen to shut it out. You choose to live in darkness."*

The light cannot illumine us, nor will not remain in us as long as we are living in sin.

¹⁸*"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that **the light** has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* (John 3:18-21)

We humans have a perverse antipathy to the light because it exposes our sins. Therefore, sin must go if the light is to come and remain. Fr. Coniaris adds that "more people are atheists for moral reason than for intellectual reasons. They love their sins and refuse to let go of them. So they choose darkness over light, atheism over belief." This is why Jesus connects the darkness of sin with the light of repentance in today's Gospel lesson. ¹⁷*From that time **Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*** (v.17).

As we conclude today, Fr. Coniaris relates the story of an old teacher once asked his pupils how they could tell when the night had ended and the day had begun. He answered them, *"It is when you can look on the face of any person and see that it is your brother or sister, the living image and icon of God. Because, if you cannot see this, then it is still night."* Let us end by listening to the words of the Apolytikion of Theophany.

Apolytikion of Theophany

At Your baptism in the Jordan O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest, for the Father's voice bore You witness by calling You His beloved Son, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of the Father's Word. O Christ our God, **You have appeared to us and enlightened the world.** Glory to You.