



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 20—26 MAY 2018

SUNDAY 20 MAY	Fathers of the 1st Council, John 17: 1-13 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30— 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
<p>***** SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES *****</p> <p>(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)</p> <p><i>Immediately after Holy Communion until Church dismissal, in the building behind the Church, Religious Instruction lessons take place for our children. We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years and are given in a relaxed, friendly environment. The understanding of our faith through the religious instruction lessons bring our children closer to God and the joy of peace of His Love.</i></p>	
MONDAY 21 MAY <i>Saints Constantine and Helen</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 22 MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 23 MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
SATURDAY 26 MAY <i>Saturday of Souls</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.00—10.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 3.45pm Service of Vespers
SUNDAY 27 MAY PENTECOST	GOSPEL READING: John 7: 7-52, 8:12 EPISTLE READING: Acts 2: 1-11



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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.

*Repentance lifts a
man up.
Mourning knocks at
heaven's gate.
Holy humility opens it.*

John Climacus

VOICE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

One should not seek among others the truth that can be easily gotten from the Church. For in her, as in a rich treasury, the apostles have placed all that pertains to truth, so that everyone can drink this beverage of life. She is the door of life.

- St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*



We know and are convinced that falling away from the Church, whether into schism, heresy, or sectarianism, is complete perdition and spiritual death. For us there is no Christianity outside of the Church. If Christ established the Church, and the Church is His Body, then to be cut off from His Body is to die. - St. Hilarion Troitsky, *On Life in the Church*

Fathers of the 1st Council, John 17: 1-13

"All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them."

In today's gospel we hear the great and profound prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today's reading is the culmination of a discourse given by Christ to his disciples at the Last Supper, which effectively begins in chapter 13 with Jesus washing the feet of the disciples and culminates in chapter 17 with the prayer that all his disciples may be one so that the world may believe in Him who sent Christ into this world. For, as Christ promised, the disciples would behold Christ's glory that had been given to him through the love of the Father before the foundation of the world.

Prayer is a fundamental need for a Christian. Prayer permits communion with God. Communion permits a relationship of intimacy. Intimacy leads to trust and trust leads to love. Without prayer you cannot be close to God. Without prayer the Father cannot be close to you. It is about prayer that I want to say something about.

There are two sorts of prayer. There is the corporate prayer that is the prayer we all give to the glory of God when we attend his church, in his name and celebrate the Eucharist. That prayer has a fixed text and is offered by the priest on behalf of the people and by the people whenever Christ's mystery is celebrated. That prayer is a joint offering with the people, for as Christ said "where there are two or three gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them." So attending church, whenever possible, is an act of prayer that is offered by those attending to the Lord above. This prayer is necessary as within it Christ, through the Eucharist, is alive among us once more.

Then there is another type of prayer. This prayer is personal prayer. This prayer involves personal communion and communication with God. This type of prayer some people find very difficult. What to say and how to say it causes great perplexity to them. Christ himself gives some understanding as to how to pray. He says in chapter 6 of Matthew's gospel "when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your father who is in secret; and your father who sees in secret will reward you". So the first things that are necessary are quite and solitude. Christ then says "and in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your father knows what you need before you ask him." Accordingly, it is not necessary for long or complicated private petitions to God but a few words from the heart. One only has to remember the parable of the Pharisee and publican where the publican would not lift up his eyes to heaven but beat his chest saying "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Prayer is not an intellectual exercise. Prayer comes from the heart and seeks out the presence of God.

Personal prayer does not even have to be spoken. Personal prayer must also involve a time for quiet reflection. This is known as contemplative prayer. Have I harmed anyone in word or deed intentionally or unintentionally? Have I spent my time for the glory of God? Is there anything I could have done better? These questions and others can be asked. At that point, having asked the question, time should be taken to listen to the answer provided by God. Prayer is the right relationship between God and man and man and God. God answers prayer but the answer and the timing is God's. One should remember always that how we see things is not the true way of things themselves. We cling to this world which paradoxically whilst clinging so means that we cannot be at one with God for this life separates us from God. Always remember that it is God's will that is done and not our own.

Before you pray you need to forgive those who have offended you or caused you harm. St John Climacus said that when you're ready to stand in the presence of the Lord, let your soul wear a garment woven from the cloth of forgiveness. No matter how long you pray and how hard you pray, unless you have the love in your heart to forgive, then your prayers come to nothing. One only has to remember first Corinthians where Paul says "if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing". Without love our prayer is meaningless.

So for true prayer what is required is quiet and solitude, simple words from the heart, an examination of yourself and listening to God. It is not about how many times you can repeat a particular prayer. It is not about how many prostrations you can do and it is not about what spiritual exercises you can do. Prayer can only be love – for Christ and for our fellow human beings.

When one looks at how Christ prays in John's gospel one sees all the elements of true prayer. In his prayer Christ's asks his Father to glorify him so that he, as the son, may reflect that glory back to Him for what is life eternal so that all of us – you and me, as his followers, may know that Christ is sent by the one true God. For as Christ asks "holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou has given me, that they may be one, even as we are one". By asking for his disciples to be kept safe by God he is showing his true love for his fellow man whom Christ wants to be as one with the Divine.

What is the lesson that we can draw from this gospel reading? It occurs to me that what we sometimes lack is the ability to pray for others, especially those who have caused pain and wish us harm. It becomes really hard to pray for your enemy, but that is the way of the Christian. It also occurs to me that prayer should be something that we offer continuously. Where ever we are, whatever we do, our thoughts should return to God so that we may magnify and glorify his great name. This means of course that we need to take seriously the idea of living every day as if we are participating in a divine liturgy. It is only by seeing the world as one continually being offered to God and having it continually returned to us humans through God's love that we begin to understand in some small measure how great God's love is for us all. So let us joyfully embrace prayer so Christ may say of us "all mine are thine, and mine are thine, and I am glorified in them." Amen.