



# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 3—9 JUNE 2018

<b>SUNDAY 3 JUNE</b>  <i>Feast of All Saints</i>	<b>Sunday of All Saints, Matt. 10: 32-33, 37-38, 19: 27-30</b> • <b>7.30– 11.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy
<p>***** <b>SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES</b> *****</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>	
<b>MONDAY 4 JUNE</b>  <i>Fast for Holy Apostles begins</i>	• <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
<b>TUESDAY 5 JUNE</b>	• <b>7.00pm</b> 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.
<b>WEDNESDAY 6 JUNE</b>	• <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
<b>SATURDAY 9 JUNE</b>	• <b>3.45pm</b> Service of Vespers
<b>SUNDAY 10 JUNE</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Matthew 4: 18-23</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: Romans 2: 10-16</b>



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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.

Leave the past to the  
mercy of God, the  
present to His love,  
and the future to His  
Providence.  
-St. Hesychios the  
Priest

### Sermon for the Sunday of All Saints - Matt. 10: 32-33, 37-38, 19: 27-30

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. (Amen.)*

Brothers and Sisters, on this day we observe a very meaning-filled celebration, after the many radiant Sundays of Great Lent and of the Season of Pascha, leading up to the glorious feast of Pentecost. Pentecost, as last week's Gospel reading told us, was "the last and greatest day of the feast," in Saint John's words, and, as it was celebrated by the Jewish nation in the time of Christ, it was a very festive holiday celebrating the harvest. Special offerings and sacrifices were prescribed by the Law for this holiday.

Pentecost, too, as we learned from last week's reading from the book of the Acts of the Holy Apostles, was the day in which the Twelve Apostles and *all* of the disciples of Christ, gathered together in Jerusalem, experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a unique and profound way. The sound of a rushing, mighty wind (or, "Breath") from heaven, and the appearance of what appeared to be a flaming fire, dividing from its unity and settling upon each of them, accompanied the gift of speaking and being understood in many languages. This miracle led to three thousand people hearing the message about Jesus and, then, on that Pentecost holiday, being added to the Church. ....!

## Sermon for the Sunday of All Saints

Today, we celebrate the feast of All Saints. We remember every man, woman, and child who has been made into a saint – made perfect, through God's action, insofar as humanity may be made perfect. This includes remembrance not only of the "famous" saints we know of – Saints Peter and Paul, our heavenly patrons, for instance, or the Most Holy Theotokos, or Saint Seraphim or Saint John of San Francisco, but **every** saint of God, famous or obscure, to the world's eyes – even those whose sainthood (sanctity), whose perfection, are known only to God, alone, and will never be known to the world of mortal human beings, in this life. Why do we take part in this celebration on this day, just after the remembering of that great Pentecost? Well, we may want to look at the timing of this feast as having a lot to do with what "being a saint **is**," what it involves, how it comes about. When we think about the action of God in the world – especially the work of the Holy Spirit, which we remember especially at Pentecost – the saints, in all of their wonderful array of variety, show forth that work in the world, in people, in men and women and children who are like us in so many ways. What makes them different – what makes them *Saints* – is that they partook of the Holy Spirit, worked with the Spirit, God Himself, in their own particular way – and were transformed from the broken, fallen state of humanity in which were born, and became what they – and, we – are meant to be.

Metropolitan Hierotheos [of Nafpaktos] is a current bishop in the Orthodox Church of Greece who has written many books. He has lectured in ethics at the University of the Patriarchate of Antioch, in northern Lebanon, as well as studied the manuscripts on Mount Athos dealing with spirituality and prayer. In his introductory, short work, *Orthodox Spirituality (An Introduction)*, His Eminence explains:

"... communion in the Most Holy Spirit makes the man of the flesh spiritual. For this reason, according to Orthodox teaching, the spiritual man, par excellence, is the Saint. Certainly, this is said from the point of view that a Saint is he who partakes, in varying degrees, in the uncreated grace of God, and especially in the deifying energy of God.

The Saints are bearers and manifestations of Orthodox spirituality. They live in God and consecutively they speak about Him. In this sense, Orthodox spirituality is not abstracted but is embodied in the personhood of the Saints. Hence the Saints are not the good people, the moralists in the strict sense of the term, or simply those who are good natured. Rather, saint is the person who submits to and acts upon the guidance of the Most Holy Spirit within." (*Orthodox Spirituality*, 19-20).

Here, then, we encounter, yet again, what we have been learning about, over and over, in the Sunday services of the Church, particularly in the Gospel readings during the Paschal Season: because our nature has been redeemed *by Christ, we are called to the process of theosis*. *Theosis* means our becoming "god-like," in a certain sense, becoming closer to, and more *like* the 'likeness' of God, by our willing response to His ever-offered grace, love, ever growing closer in relationship to Him – to the Holy Trinity, God, Himself, a communion of Persons ever united in love.

How can we do this? The ways and means have been given to us by God, in and through the Church. By praying daily, as much and at whatever level we are able; by looking over our lives, regularly, and examining our sins and shortcomings, then bringing these to God in Confession, and striving to overcome whatever sins seem to "so easily beset us"; by worshipping in the services of the Church, and by partaking of the Holy Gifts of the Eucharist at Communion as often as we may; and by fulfilling the commandments, teachings, and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, calling these to mind **constantly** and seeking to live them out **each day**. We are not alone in this daily striving, due to the witness of the thousands – millions – of saints, known and unknown, who came before us, and who still pray for us. The good news is that there is no "one way" to be an Orthodox Christian, or a Saint. The wondrous variety of the Saints assures us of that! There are emperors, queens, monks, gardeners, cooks, soldiers, and people from every station and walk of life represented in this "great cloud of witnesses". We don't have to be a certain personality type, or all bring the same kind of talents or gifts to the service of God. In fact, our very uniquenesses (if that is a word) are part of what it means for each one of us to be called to be a saint! We not only become closer to (and more like) God as we grow in *theosis*, we become more [like] **who we really are** – as individuals, and as humans / humanity, generally. Bishop Hierotheos mentions a couple of distinguishing features of Saints. One of them he describes this way:

"We are assured of the existence of the Saints... [by] the existence of **holy relics** of the Saints. The holy relics are the token that through the *nous* ["eye of the soul"] the grace of God transfigured the body also. Consequently, the bodies participate in the energies of the Most Holy Spirit. The primary work of the Church is to lead man to *theosis*, to communion and union with God. Given this, in a sense we can say that the work of the Church is to 'produce relics'.

Thus, Orthodox spirituality is the experience of life in Christ, the atmosphere of the new man, regenerated by the grace of God. It is not an abstract, emotional and psychological state of being. It is man's union with God." (*Orthodox Spirituality*, 19-20).

Sometimes we may feel uncomfortable about "relics of saints," especially as the culture which we live in, by and large, has a very different approach to relics than what is found in the mindset of places where the Orthodox Church has thrived and grown for centuries. The American "disease" with bodily death even means that the funeral industry takes away from our immediate view the reality of physical death by making a deceased loved one "look just like he (or she) is asleep" probably doesn't help when we are confronted with the reality of God's vivifying work, through the Holy Spirit in the bodies of His saints. The Metropolitan's words, though, tell us why it is that relics of saints **are**, indeed important – because of the fact that we are all called to be transformed by the grace of God working in the Holy Spirit! ... not only intellectually, in our minds, or in some vaguely "spiritual" way, but in **every part and fiber and molecule of our being** – in life, and even beyond life. The promise of the Resurrection and of Pentecost is that we are transformed – from what we *now* are, to what we **really** are, and what we were **always meant to be**, in God's gracious, loving plan. The path may not be easy; in fact, the words of Christ Himself and the examples of many, many saints' lives promise that it will often not be easy; it will be hard. One more quote, this time from Father Alexander Elchaninov, a priest living in exile in France after the Russian Revolution:

"People keep saying, 'Life is hard!' And if you cite the example of the saints, the usual reply is: 'Well, they are not saints for nothing, it is easy for them!' A common error. It is the saints in particular who found it hard. They overcame not only worldly difficulties but the very essence of their humanity. The usual path of the saint – from the abyss of sin to the summit of holiness – is narrow and arduous. Whereas our course is always an easy one, along the line of least resistance; but the fruits of our course are bitter and burdensome, whereas the hard way yields the reward of true beatitude" (*The Diary of a Russian Priest*, London, 1973, p. 172).

Perhaps in this coming year we could make it a practice to spend a few minutes daily, or a couple of times a week, looking up and reading a brief story, or biography, or life of one of the saints commemorated on that day. There are many resources for doing this – websites abound (*we can send links!*), and Ancient Faith Radio has a podcast to share, in just a couple of minutes, these riches from those may not have had it easy, all the time – but they did find true joy, and the blessing of living a life lived with God. That is what it means to be a Saint. Let us, each day, "go and do likewise"...!

**... through the prayers of all the Saints, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and save us!**