



# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 8—14 JULY 2018

<b>SUNDAY 8 JULY</b>	<b>6th Sunday of Matthew, Matthew 9: 1-8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<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 9 JULY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction</li><li>• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.</li></ul>
<b>TUESDAY 10 JULY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.00pm Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord, Coburg Youth Group will meet in our Church Hall. The meeting will begin with the Compline Service in English.</li><li>• 7.30pm Young Adults and Married Couples Bible Study Group at St. Vasilios, in the Church Coffee Room.</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY 11 JULY</b> <b>St Euphemia, Great-Martyr</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study</li></ul>
<b>THURSDAY 12 JULY</b> <b>Osios Paisios the Athonite</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.00– 9.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>SATURDAY 14 JULY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3.45pm Service of Vespers</li></ul>
<b>SUNDAY 8 JULY</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Matthew 5: 14-19</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: Titus 3: 8-15</b>



### Telephone Contact Numbers

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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.

*Every man should  
willingly cultivate the  
field of his heart but  
also needs the rains  
of the Grace.*

*St. Makarios of Egypt*

## VOICE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS ....

### What Helps Spiritual Progress

*People who have been buffeted by rough winds, either because God allowed it in order to rein them in, or because of the devil's envy, are in need of much sunshine and spiritual refreshment before they can blossom and bear fruit. They are like trees that have grown bold during winter's halcyon days, only to face the cold north wind afterwards; they will need constant spring sunshine and showers for their sap to circulate again and to blossom and bear fruit.*

*...Trust in God, simplicity, and struggle with philotimo will lead to inner peace and security and then the soul fills with hope and joy...*

*Christ helps those who are fighting the good fight that all Saints embraced in order to subdue the flesh to the spirit. Even when wounded, we must never lose our composure, but should instead ask for God's help in continuing with the struggle courageously. The Good Shepherd will hear us and rush to our aid, just as a shepherd responds to the bleating of a lamb that is lost or wounded, or threatened by a wolf.*

*- Elder Paisios, Spiritual awakening,*

## 6th Sunday of Matthew, Matthew 9: 1-8

I affirm in your presence this day that we're witnesses of a beautiful miracle this morning: through the living word of the Gospel, we see a paralyzed man who cannot walk on his own, healed of his paralysis by God, He who had made his legs in the first place and given this man his first heart-beat in his mother's womb. For, as the Psalmist David says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made... You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb" (Ps. 138). Christ God, as the Logos (Word) of God, through whom all things were made, knew this man and loved this man with a fatherly love even before he was presented to him.

Yes, the paralytic was brought to His Creator, our Creator, and He received healing from the Lord. He was given a new lease on life, a new beginning.

Every miracle, both those past and present, is a testimony of the truth of God, the truth that is God, in that it points us directly to the Kingdom of Heaven, to the restoration of the human race. Every miracle reminds us of God's defeat of sin and death on the cross, His triumphant resurrection from the dead, His harrowing of Hades, His glorious ascension, and His victorious and final Second Coming when all that Christ has assumed, will restore all those who have joined the new race of Adam in Christ and we will see a new heaven and a new earth in which Christ will be all in all. Miracles are a sign of the "eschaton," the reality of the Kingdom of God after the Second Coming of Christ.

The healing of the paralytic alludes to all of these works and promises of God on our behalf, where those who are being saved will be gathered up to join the ranks of heaven in Christ God's near presence, where "sighing and sorrow shall flee away" (Isaiah 51:11).

A greater miracle is at work here in today's Gospel: We read that when Jesus saw the faith of those who had brought the paralytic to him, He instantly healed the man of his paralysis? No! He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." This was not what some were expecting; Christ's words must have come as quite a shock.

These men didn't pull up in a car, an easy drive from the city on modern roads, and carry their friend the last hundred feet to lay him before Jesus. These men must have carried their friend a great distance. Why? Because they had faith that Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, could heal their friend of his condition. They would not have undertaken such an exhausting enterprise as to carry a grown man so many miles on foot without possessing great faith. And Jesus first says to the man not, "take up your bed and walk," but "your sins are forgiven you."

Christ clearly teaches us here the priority of our eternal souls over our decaying bodies. Our souls are eternal. Sin, having entered the world and separated us from Him who is Life itself, means that our bodies wear out "like a garment" (Job 13). It wasn't meant to be so: in Christ, we'll be given resurrected bodies at His Second Coming. And so here we see yet another sign of the eschaton to come.

Christ addresses the ultimate need of the paralytic. Yes, he needs his legs, but more importantly, he needs to be cleansed, purified, forgiven. More important than the healing of his legs is the healing of his soul, of his becoming an adopted son of the living God, a co-heir with Christ. Everything else pales in comparison.

By forgiving the sins of the man, Christ clearly declares Himself to be God for, as the scribes rightly understood, "who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk. 2:7; Lk. 5:21) Exactly! Their sinful hearts could not comprehend that the God who lovingly spoke creation into being through His Word (His Logos), would Himself enter into human nature to restore that nature, to restore a path to the Kingdom for His beloved sons and daughters, the pinnacle of His creation, with whom He so dearly desires communion.

The Scribes instantly charge blasphemy. Then Christ, to deepen the faith of all those assembled and silence the actual blasphemers, does two things that reveal Himself to be God: first, He tells them what they are thinking, saying, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins..." and then and only then, does Christ say to the man, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." The man arose and departed to his house. Both of these miracles, the revelation of the inner thoughts of others and the healing of the paralysis prove that Christ is God.

What a joy! Can you feel it? Can you see it on the faces of this man and his friends? Their load has been taken from them. They walk home together, rejoicing, glorifying God. But the greatest joy is that this son of Adam has been forgiven, reconciled to God.

Before our baptism and the possibility of the renewal of that baptism through confession, we too are paralyzed by sin. Even in the life of an Orthodox Christian who has become part of the new creation, a beloved child of the eschaton, this world and all its confusion and hedonism may take hold of the unwary soul and paralyze it with addictions and habitual sins.

Those beset by any passions, repeated sins that paralyze our souls from progressing in our deification, our journey further up and further in the Kingdom of God and communion with the only Lover of mankind, here the words of our Lord, "Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house." With the Lord, there is forgiveness, there is new life, there is renewal. Fittingly, the title given to this story in the Orthodox Scriptures is "the Paralytic Restored."

Christ God will restore us to if we come before His presence with faith, with the hope of restoration, of growth, of renewal in Him who is Life itself, the Great Physician of our souls. He alone is God, the only One who can forgive our sins, renew our baptism, and help us to progress in our participation in His life. Call on Him in time of need, entrust yourself to His grace and mercy. His grace is sufficient and His strength is perfected in weakness.

Fr. Robert Miclean