



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 14—20 JULY 2019

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| SUNDAY 14 JULY | SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS, Matthew 5: 14-19 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy |
| ➡ 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. | |
| MONDAY 15 JULY | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8.45am Service of Holy Unction• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall. |
| TUESDAY 16 JULY | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.00pm Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord Youth Group will meet in our Church Hall. |
| WEDNESDAY 17 JULY St Marina, Great-Martyr | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study |
| THURSDAY 18 JULY | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30—8.30pm ➡ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP (Ages 13-19) In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church * ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME * |
| SATURDAY 20 JULY Prophet Elias the Tishbite | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy |
| SUNDAY 21 JULY | GOSPEL READING: Matthew 8: 28-34—9:1 EPISTLE READING: Romans 10: 1-10 |



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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.

"If you find that there is
no love in you, but you
want to have it, then do
deeds of love, even
though you do them
without love in the
beginning. The Lord will
see your desire and
striving and will put love
in your heart."

St. Ambrose of Optina

VOICE OF THE HOLY FATHERS

*"The glorious Elias, incarnate messenger of God, pillar of Prophets and forerunner of the second coming of Christ, sent grace from on high to Elisha that he might cure sickness and cleanse lepers.
Overflowing with healing for all those who honor him."
~Troparion to Prophet Elias~*

Holy Prophet Elias

Prophet Elias (Elijah) was a hero of faithfulness to God in Israel and a courageous prophet. Achab (Ahab), seventh King of Israel, (875-854 BC), influenced by his pagan wife Jezebel, had forgotten the true God and returned to paganism. Elias reproached the king for his idolatry and killed the priests of Baal. He fled to the mountains because of Jezebel's anger. God appeared to him there, and a crow brought him bread for food. At the time of Josaphat, King of Israel (874-850 BC), Elias was taken up in a chariot of fire in the presence of his disciple Eliseus (Elisha). The prophet Malachias had said: "Behold, I will send you Elias the Prophet, before the coming and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." (Mal. 4:5) The prophet refers to the second coming of the Lord, at the end of the world.

Shining with His Light: Homily for the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council

In just about anything we do in life, it is helpful at times to sit back and ask ourselves what we are trying to achieve. Unless we have a clear purpose in mind, we are probably not going to get very far in anything. By taking a hard look at ourselves, we may find that there is a disconnection between our goals and our actions. If so, some adjustments are in order.

What Jesus Christ told His followers in today's gospel lesson certainly challenged them to take a hard look at themselves and change their expectations. He made clear that He was not calling them to join a nationalistic campaign for Israel's liberation from the Romans, as most Jews then expected the Messiah to do. Instead, they would have to abandon their dreams of using Him to gain power. They would not conquer with an army, a revolution, or a political party, but were to become the light of the world by becoming holy. That holiness would not be the result of obedience merely to the externals of the law as interpreted by the Pharisees, but would instead reflect its fulfillment to the depths of their souls.

By teaching in the following verses that the commandment against murder extended to prohibit anger and insult, Christ showed that He called His followers to a purity of heart that would enable them to see God. He did the same by insisting that the law against adultery also condemned lust. He called the disciples to embody the fulfillment of the ultimate purpose of the law: to become perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. It is in that context that the Saviour taught that we must go beyond "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" and instead love, forgive, and bless even our enemies. Whether in first-century Palestine or today, those who live this way will be a light to the world as they provide a vivid example of a holy life that stands in stark contrast to the usual ways of our age. It will be as impossible to hide the brilliance of their souls as it is to hide a shining lamp in a dark room.

Today we commemorate the Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which met at Chalcedon. This council taught that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures, being fully divine and fully human. It is only by confessing that He is both perfectly God and perfectly man that it is possible to give an account of how He is the Saviour Who brings human beings into the eternal life of God. For if He is not truly one of us, even as He is divine, how can He make human beings "partakers of the divine nature" who shine with holiness like an iron left in the fire? Christ enables us to become the light of the world by becoming radiant with His light, by being illuminated with His gracious divine energies. He is able to share His holiness with us because He is both fully God and fully human. This is not simply a point from ancient Church history, but the bedrock of our faith and our hope.

It is also the most basic reason that we must all take a hard look at ourselves and adjust how we think and live as Christians. For if we truly believe that the eternal Son of God has become fully one of us and makes us participants in His eternal life, then His holiness must become characteristic of our lives. Anything less than that is a distortion of what it means to be a person in communion with our Lord. His true humanity enables us to become truly human as the fulfillment of our creation in His image and likeness. That is why we speak so much of *theosis* in the Orthodox Church as the process of being united with God in holiness.

If we have made any progress at all in this journey of the healing of our souls, we will immediately be aware of how poorly we have answered this call. The greater spiritual clarity we acquire, the more open our eyes will be to how far we are from shining brilliantly with the light of holiness. So if our reaction to this high vision is along the lines of "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner," we are in the perfect place to embrace more fully our identity as the light of the world. That is the case because humility is absolutely essential to opening ourselves to the gracious divine energies of our Lord. Consider again His interpretation of the laws against murder and adultery. If they referred only to the physical actions of taking life or being unfaithful to a spouse, many could congratulate themselves for not breaking them. But when they extend to condemn anger, insult, and lust, our illusions of self-righteousness immediately fall away. The same is true about loving our enemies, for Christ calls us to go beyond limiting our vengeance to turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, and loving as our Father loves the just and unjust. We probably do not have to have much spiritual clarity to see that we are not there yet.

Were Jesus Christ simply another religious or moral teacher, these high requirements would probably lead us to despair and give up. Rules tell us what to do, but do not give us the strength to obey them. But because Christ is both divine and human, He provides more than a set of instructions. For precisely through our awareness of how far short we have fallen from meeting these standards, He heals and strengthens us to serve Him more faithfully. The calling to holiness is not about meeting abstract rules by our own power, but about being united with a Person by grace. Even as He has made great saints out of so many sinners who kneeled in humility before Him, His transforming mercy extends also to us. That is a sign of hope for us all. Who would have thought that Zacchaeus, a notorious tax collector, or Photini, a Samaritan woman of questionable reputation, would become shining lights of the world? They did not do so because of perfect obedience to the law. Far from it, they came to see their own brokenness through personal encounters with Jesus Christ. Their humble acceptance of the distance between themselves and the Lord enabled them to grow closer to Him, to open their lives to a divine healing that they could never have given themselves.

They show that, as we fall before Christ in humility, He will raise us up to participate personally in His holiness in ways that simply cannot be known except through repentance. If we truly believe that Jesus Christ is the God-Man Who has come to make us participants in His healing of every dimension of our humanity, then we must follow the example of all the sinners who have become saints by opening themselves to participate in our Lord's holiness. Instead of worrying about whether we will get our lives in perfect order according to our own standards, we must simply do what we have the sight and strength to do today in serving Him as we know we should. St. Paul reminded St. Titus to tell the people to avoid foolish arguments, do good deeds, and meet urgent needs. If we fill our lives with the things we know we should be doing and ignore the temptation to become distracted by nonsense, He will enable us to become light to the world. Since He Himself is the Light, the more closely united we are to Christ, the more brilliantly our lives will become signs of the fulfillment of His purposes for the entire creation.

Perhaps one of the reasons many people do not take the faith seriously today is that the lives of so many Christians do not manifest Christ's healing and blessing of our humanity. If we are not living icons of His fulfillment of the law and the prophets, then we are very poor witnesses to our Lord. As Orthodox Christians who have received the fullness of the Church's teaching about Jesus Christ as God and man, we have no excuse to accept distorted views of what faithfulness to Him means such that we excuse ourselves from the vocation to holiness. Even as He did with His first disciples, He calls us to adjust our lives to be in line with His gracious purposes for those created in His image and likeness. As we turn away from all distractions, let us keep focused on shining the light of Christ so that others will give thanks to God and be drawn to the new day of His Kingdom. There is no other way to bear true witness to the Saviour Who is both fully human and divine, for He came to enable us to shine with His holy light in our darkened world.

Fr. Philip LeMasters