





# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 23—29 JUNE 2019

<b>SUNDAY</b> <b>23 JUNE</b>	<b>SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS, Matthew 10: 32,33, 37-38, 19: 27-30</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<div> <b>SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES</b> (A free voluntary program organised by the Church)</div> <p>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.</p>	
<b>MONDAY</b> <b>24 JUNE</b> <i>Nativity of St John the Baptist</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.</li></ul>
<b>TUESDAY</b> <b>25 JUNE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00pm</b> Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord Youth Group will meet in our Church Hall.</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> <b>26 JUNE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study</li></ul>
<b>THURSDAY</b> <b>27 JUNE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30—8.30pm</b> <div> <b>TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP (Ages 13-19)</b> In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church <i>* ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME *</i></div></li><li>• <b>7.30pm</b> Young Adults and Married Couples Bible Study Group at St. Vasilios, in the Church Coffee Room.</li></ul>
<b>SATURDAY</b> <b>29 JUNE</b> <i>Holy Apostles Saints Peter and Paul</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• <b>3.45pm</b> Service of Vespers</li></ul>
<b>SUNDAY</b> <b>30 JUNE</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Matthew 9: 36—10: 1-8</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: 1Corinthians 4: 9-16</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.

"In order to fulfill the commandments of Christ, you must know them! Read the Holy Gospel, penetrate its spirit and make it the rule of your life."

+ St. Nikon of Optina

### The Holy Apostle Peter

The son of Jonah and brother of Andrew the First-Called, of the tribe of Simeon and the town of Bethsaida. he was a fisherman and was at first called Simon, but the Lord was pleased to call him Cephas, or Peter (Jn 1:42). He was the first of the disciples to give clear expression to his faith in the Lord Jesus, saying: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt, 16:16). His love for the Lord was very strong, and his faith in Him went from strength to strength. When the Lord was put on trial Peter denied Him three times, but it needed only one look into the face of the Lord. and Peter's soul was filled with shame and repentance. After the descent of the Holy Spirit. Peter became a fearless and powerful preacher of the Gospel. After his first sermon in Jerusalem, about 3,000 souls were converted to the Faith. He preached the Gospel throughout Palestine and Asia Minor, in Italy and in Illyria. He performed many wonders, healing the sick and raising the dead, and even his shadow had the power of healing the sick. He had a major struggle with Simon the Magician, who declared himself to be from God but was actually a servant of the devil. He finally put him to shame and overcame him. Peter was condemned to death on the order of the wicked Emperor Nero, a friend of Simon's. After installing Linus as Bishop of Rome and exhorting and encouraging the flock of Christ there, Peter went to his death with joy. When he saw the cross before him, he asked the executioner to crucify him upside-down, because he felt himself to be unworthy to die in the same way as his Lord. And so this great servant of the greatest Master went to his rest and received a crown of eternal glory.

### The Holy Apostle Paul

Born in Tarsus and of the tribe of Benjamin, he was formerly called Saul and studied under Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee and a persecutor of Christians. He was wondrously converted to the Christian faith by the Lord Himself, who appeared to him on the road to Damascus. He was baptised by the Apostle Ananias, named Paul and enrolled in the work of the Great Apostles. He preached the Gospel everywhere with burning zeal, from the borders of Arabia to the land of Spain, among both the Jews and the heathen, and receiving the title of 'the Apostle to the Gentiles'. His fearful sufferings were matched only by his superhuman endurance. Through all the years of his preaching, he hung from day to day like a thread between life and death. Filling his days and nights with toil and suffering for Christ, organising the Church in many places and reaching a high level of perfection, he was able to say: 'I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. 2:20). He was beheaded in Rome in the reign of Nero, at the same time as St Peter.

## Everyday Holiness: Homily for the Sunday of All Saints in the Orthodox Church

If you are like me, sometimes when you read the lives of the saints you shake your head and think, “I could never do anything like that.” Many endured horrible tortures to the point of death because they refused to deny Christ. Others denied themselves food, clothing, and shelter in ways that seem beyond the strength of human beings. Some accepted insult and abuse while forgiving their tormentors and turning the other cheek in a fashion that seems not of this world. As today’s epistle reading reminds us, the Old Testament saints endured such trials purely in anticipation of the coming of the Saviour. Most of us, who have received the fullness of the promise in Christ, cannot fathom how we could be nearly as faithful as was this cloud of witnesses who point us by their examples and prayers to commend our lives to Christ.

On this Sunday of All Saints, we commemorate all those who have united themselves to the Lord to the point that they have become radiant with His holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit, including those whose are not formally canonized as saints by the Church. The canonized saints are like the members of the hall of fame who stand as shining examples of obedience to the Lord. We celebrate them because their lives are such vivid icons of what it means for a human being to become a partaker of the divine nature by grace. We do not know the names of all the saints, of course. Not all who are illumined with the divine glory are known publically as such; of course, the point of holiness is never simply to draw attention to oneself. It is, instead, to be faithful in offering our lives to Christ. Only He knows the names and number of those Who have done that, for He alone knows our hearts.

If we want to join their number, then we must attend carefully to Christ’s teachings today in the gospel reading. “Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father Who is in heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father Who is in heaven.” No doubt, these words concern the importance of remaining faithful to the Lord even in the face of fierce persecution. Martyrs and confessors continue to refuse to deny Him, regardless of the physical abuse they suffer in many countries around the world. But we would let ourselves off the hook by thinking that this teaching refers only to those who lives are literally at risk for being faithful Christians. We must also ask whether we acknowledge Him before our neighbors every day of our lives in what we say and do. It is only our pride that makes us think that true faithfulness must be dramatic and spectacular. Most of us struggle to be faithful even in our routine trials and temptations. We will fail to unite ourselves to Christ in holiness if we fail to see that the most common challenges that we face are our opportunities to acknowledge that we belong to Him, and not simply to ourselves.

The Saviour said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.” There is nothing wrong, of course with loving our parents or our children, but if we are to become radiant with the holiness of God, we must keep even our strongest loves in proper order. We must remember that our parents, children, and spouses are gifts of God to us. His love is obviously the ground of all love worthy of the name. Our calling is not to worship people or make them ends in themselves, but to relate to them in a way that fulfills God’s gracious purposes for them and us. If we make false gods out of others, we will make them miserable and probably drive them away. And since God created us in His image and likeness, we will learn the hard way that we will never find fulfillment in anyone but Him.

“People pleasing” is quite dangerous because it is ultimately a self-centred form of idolatry in which we crave the approval of others to the point that we will sacrifice anything for it. Instead of offering even our most prized and intimate relationships to the Lord for His healing and blessing, we end up offering ourselves to others, willing to compromise our faithfulness for the sake of giving whomever we want to impress what we think they want. That is not taking up our crosses, but sacrificing our obedience to the Saviour in order to serve lesser gods. And since what drives this attitude is our self-centered desire for the approval of others, it is ultimately a way of worshiping ourselves.

The Lord said that, “everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My Name’s sake, will receive a hundred fold, and inherit eternal life.” That is not only a promise for those who have physically given up their families and possessions, but also for those who have made the less dramatic sacrifice of putting Christ first in how they treat and speak to their spouse, children, family members, and friends. It is a promise for those who have denied themselves in order to have more time, energy, and resources to share with the poor, sick, and lonely. It is a promise for those who turn away from self-centeredness by offering themselves to the Lord in daily prayer, regular worship, and conscientious fasting.

Too often we think that holiness occurs only within the context of the four walls of the Church. If we are to take up our crosses and follow Christ, we must also learn to see the infinite opportunities of dying to self out of love for Him and our neighbors in our daily lives. That means we must take a painfully honest look at ourselves. For example, we may enjoy filling our minds with entertainment—such as news, social media, video games, film, etc.—that only inflames passions of worry, fear, hate, envy, and lust. If so, we need to turn away from it as we focus on the words of the Jesus Prayer or at least something else that does not inflame our passions. If we cannot learn to make such small sacrifices, we will never have the strength to make larger ones.

Regardless of our age, we likely are close to people whose values and way of life are apparently not consistent with obedience to Christ. Even as we must not condemn them personally, we must resist the subtle temptation to compromise our faithfulness to the Lord in what we say and do in order to gain their approval. It is one thing to show everyone Christ’s love as best we can, but another to fail to acknowledge Him by engaging in conduct and conversation that contradict our primary loyalty to Him. That would be a form of putting other people, and ultimately ourselves, before God, which is a path only to greater weakness for them and us. We must all discern mindfully and prayerfully whether we are acknowledging Christ in situations where it is much easier to act and speak as though He were not our Lord. We must all be willing to take up the cross of obedience to Him even if it means that we will be met with disapproval.

“Many that are first will be last, and the last first.” The Saviour’s statement applies to all who have put Him first in their lives, for doing so requires sacrificing much that the world worships. It is obviously the case for martyrs and confessors to this very day, but also applies to everyone who sacrifices, even in small ways, in order to seek first the Kingdom of God. When we direct our time, energy, and attention to serve Christ, His Church, and our neighbors in whom He is present, we take a lower place in the estimation of the world. When we refuse to sacrifice ourselves on the altars of conventional accounts of success and happiness, we embrace the humility of Christ. Even when we do so in seemingly ordinary ways, we take step in running “with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfection of our faith.” That is how, we too, may join that great cloud of witnesses who have become radiant with the holiness of our Lord. Nothing dramatic or spectacular is required, but only true faithfulness.

- Fr. Philip LeMasters