





PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 18– 24 AUGUST 2019

SUNDAY 18 AUGUST	NINTH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 14: 22-34 <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 19 AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8.45am Service of Holy Unction• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
TUESDAY 20 AUGUST	<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.
WEDNESDAY 21 AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
THURSDAY 22 AUGUST	<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 *<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30pm Young Adults and Married Couples Bible Study Group at St. Vasilios, in the Church Coffee Room.
SATURDAY 24 AUGUST St Cosmas of Aitolia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SUNDAY 25 AUGUST	GOSPEL READING: Matthew 14: 22-34 EPISTLE READING: 1Corinthians 4: 9-16



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.

“True, one may know
man’s final goal:
communion with God.
And one may describe
the path to it: faith, and
walking in the command-
ments, with the aid of
divine grace. One need
only say in addition:
here is the path
—start walking!”

St Theophan the Recluse

Saint Kosmas Aitolos (August 24)

The holy, glorious and right-victorious New Hieromartyr and *Equal-to-the-Apostles* Kosmas Aitolos (also known as Cosmas Aitolos, and St Cosmas the Aetolian) was born in 1714 in Aitolia, Greece, to a father who was a weaver and a devout mother. He attended public schools, but was tutored by an archdeacon. He taught and then attended a school on Mt. Athos. He became a monk and later a priest at Philotheou Monastery there. After a time, he felt a calling to do missionary work in Greece, especially in the remote areas where there was a lack of churches and priests for the many unbaptized adults. As an aftermath of four centuries of Turkish oppression in Greece, Kosmas received the patriarchal blessing to travel wherever needed, for however long, with complete independence, to breathe life back into Christianity in Greece. Kosmas travelled in Greece, its islands, and Albania for 25 years, founding over 200 schools, as well as charities and rural churches. He travelled by foot, by donkey and by ship. When he came to a village he would ask the villagers to plant a large wooden cross in the village square. Then he would mount a bench next to the cross and preach to the villagers about the love of God and the Orthodox faith. The Muslims tried him on charges of conspiracy and sentenced him to hang in August 1779 in Albania. However, one account reports that he prayed and gave up his spirit before this could occur. St. Kosmas received from God the gift of prophecy, and was known to have prophesied of the telephone, airplanes, and aerial bombings. Patriarch Athenagoras glorified him in 1961. His feast day is celebrated on August 24.

Today's Gospel passage, my dear brethren, continues the narrative of St. Matthew's Gospel from where we left it on last Sunday. After the miracle of the multiplication of the five loaves, the evangelist is about to record another wondrous event, only this time, the miracle is restricted within the close circle of the Lord's disciples. For whereas the multitudes were given bread, that is, that which appealed most immediately to their desires and needs, the disciples were given a sign of a different kind: to them Christ's reveals the miracle by which miracles are made, that is, the miracle of faith.

But first, notice the juxtaposition with which our passage opens. "When He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat [where the disciples were] was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary" (Mt. 14:23-24). In this opening picture we have, on the one hand, the Lord alone praying in the stillness and the quietness of the mountain, while, on the other hand, the tempest in the middle of the sea to which the disciples are caught.

The sea, especially a stormy sea, was always in the ancient literature an image, a symbol of the uncertainty of life, of a life lived tossed about by the cares of the world. It is so used by the allegorical reading of the Homeric poems, where Odysseus long journey through the angry sea to the safety of his Ithaca was interpreted as a parable for man's journey through the travails of worldly life. So the sea, one time calm, another stormy, becomes a symbol of life's vicissitudes. In stark contrast, the solitude of the mountain represents a life devoted to contemplation, a life withdrawn from the cares of the world and dedicated to prayer.

The surprising element in today's Gospel is that the Lord, once has removed Himself from the multitudes and withdrawn to the mountain, does not remain there but returns—where?—precisely in the midst of the storm. The Lord descends once more into the middle of the worldly life, the middle of world's noisiness and commotion in order to affirm them. The retreat to a life of contemplation cannot and should not despise the world—and the recluse must learn to come down from the mountain of his spiritual existence in order to meet again with care his own cares and those of others. "Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear" (Mt. 14:25-26).

Notice that His appearance was not comforting to the disciples, rather it added more fear to the fear they were already experiencing, being at risk to be drowned into the sea. Similarly, God's interventions in our lives might not feel as comfortable as we may expect. We may even have difficulty recognize this or that turn of events as His work, as the disciples could not recognize Him but thought He was a ghost.

Peter, though, said: "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water" (Mt. 14:28). This is the moment of the miracle and it is motivated, as you see, not from a desire to perform or to observe the extraordinary and the supernatural but from the desire to meet the Lord: "if it is You, command me to come to You". Peter's request should become our prayer at moments of anxiety and fear like those the disciples experienced in today's Gospel. "Lord, if it is You"—that is, if this course of events is from You, if it comes from You—"command me to come to You"—let it be for me an occasion that will draw me closer to You.

So Peter is able to do what is for him impossible, that is, to walk on water. "And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mt. 14:29-31). Even though he was able to do the impossible, he started sinking into the water. Why? The answer lies at the when. When did Peter start sinking into the water? At the moment when he withdrew his eyes from the Lord and start paying attention to the boisterous wind—marvelling perhaps that he was able to do what he was doing, that his feet stepped into the sea as if on dry land. At that moment, the sea becomes again the sea and Peter is sinking. This cannot be happening, Peter is thinking, and indeed, as soon as he thinks that, that is, as soon as he doubts that it could happen, then it is not happening any more. For doubt is the opposite of faith.

We hear today's Gospel and, like Peter, we doubt: how could such things really happen? They cannot happen if we do not believe that they could happen, and so this vicious circle of doubt comes full circle to its logical conclusion: nothing wonderful (quite literally, full of wonder) happens—because we have no eyes for what is wonderful. But for him who has eyes for the wonderful nothing is without it: that Peter walked on the water is nothing any more wonderful than his boat could stay afloat. And if we doubt what is wonderful this is because we think that we ought to perform it. Again, Peter sinks at the moment he starts paying attention to himself, to what he is doing as if it was him that he was doing it. That is why the evangelist quite poignantly adds that "immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him." Learn by this whose doing this was. So, even when we succeed in something in our agitated lives, we are doomed to fail as soon as we take it to be our own work and our own achievement, as soon as we take the credit for it. Rather, we should, like "those who were in the boat, [come] and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God" (Mt. 14:33). Amen.

Fr.Dr.John Panteleimon Manoussakis, OMHKSEA



On Gratitude and Good Thoughts

An elder said: "Let us build a factory of good thoughts. If a factory produces bullets and we feed it with iron, it will make bullets. If the factory makes chalices and we feed it with gold, it will produce gold chalices. If we feed it with iron, it will make chalices of iron. Whatever thoughts we put in our minds, that is what we will get. "

Athonite Gerondikon