



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 15—21 DECEMBER 2019

SUNDAY 15 DECEMBER St. Eleutherios, and mother Anthia	11th SUNDAY OF LUKE, (Sunday of the Forefathers), Luke 14: 16-24 <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. ➤ <i>Our final Sunday School Classes for 2019 will be on Sunday 22 December. Notification of the recommencement date for classes in 2020 will be published early in 2020 in the Church Bulletin.</i>	
MONDAY 16 DECEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8.45am Service of Holy Unction• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER St Dionysios of Zakynthos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SUNDAY 22 DECEMBER	GOSPEL READING: Matthew 1: 1-25 EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 11: 9-10, 32-40

VOICE OF THE HOLY FATHERS

The Hieromartyr Eleutherius.

A good fruit of a good tree, this wonderful saint had noble and eminent parents. He was born in Rome, where his father was in imperial service. His mother, Anthea, heard the Gospel from the great Apostle Paul himself, and was baptised by him. Being early left a widow, she entrusted her only son to the education and service of the Bishop of Rome, Anacleto. Seeing how greatly Eleutherius was gifted and illumined by the grace of God, the bishop ordained him deacon at the age of fifteen, priest at eighteen and bishop at twenty. Endowed by God with wisdom, he made up for what he lacked in years. This godly man was made bishop in Illyria, with his seat at Valona in Albania. He kept his flock like a good shepherd, adding to their number from day to day. The Emperor Hadrian, a persecutor of Christians, sent a commander, Felix, with soldiers, to seize Eleutherius and take him to Rome. When the furious Felix arrived in Valona and went into the church, and heard and saw God's holy hierarchy, his heart was suddenly changed and he became a Christian. Eleutherius baptised him and set off with him for Rome, as merrily as though he were going to a feast, not to trial and torture. The Emperor put the gently-born Eleutherius to harsh torture, flogging him, burning him on an iron grid, boiling him in pitch and burning him in a fiery furnace. But, by God's power, Eleutherius was delivered from all these deadly torments. Seeing all this, Choribus the governor proclaimed that he himself was a Christian. Choribus was tortured and then beheaded, and so also blessed Felix. Finally, the imperial executioners cut off the honoured head of St Eleutherius. When his mother, holy Anthea, came and stood over the dead body of her son, she was also beheaded. Their bodies were taken to Valona, where St Eleutherius glorifies the name of Christ to this day by many wonders. He suffered in the time of Hadrian, in the year 120.



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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.

Love towards
one's brother
cultivates
love towards God.

St Porphyrios

11th SUNDAY OF LUKE, Sunday of the Forefathers Luke 14: 16-24

The parable of the Great Banquet, which we heard today in the Holy Gospel, was told by Jesus at the house of a Pharisee lord during a dinner in which he had been invited with others. He took the opportunity to teach this parable from the words of one of those who ate with Him: "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15).

The Lord compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a great feast or banquet in which everyone wants to take part. Here they can enjoy the goods that the affectionate Father God has prepared. So he sends his servant to call the most distinguished and important people. But each refused to attend and made excuses. The first said to him: "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go see it." A silly excuse! He didn't look at the land before he bought it? The second one said: I bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them." Could this not have been done later? And the third said: "I have married a wife and therefore cannot come." He was called on a joyous occasion, and he had a chance to bring his wife with him!

All of them have a common feature: They did not appreciate the honour that was offered to them by the host, who had prepared such a great feast.

This is just what happened to the Lord when he called the Israelites. Here was the Son of God, who came as a man to the earth and invited them to believe in Him and to enter into His heavenly Kingdom! They were the first, but they said no. It is the same with different people whom God calls to enjoy the blessings He offers through His holy Church. For various reasons, they refuse.

In addition to His Kingdom in Heaven, the Lord invites Christians to another great Supper that is prepared here on earth. It is the Last Supper, the first time Jesus spoke to His disciples that Great Thursday night, shortly before being arrested and led to Calvary. This Lasting Supper continues to be offered today, as it has over the centuries, so that all Christians for all time can participate in it. We understand: It is the Holy Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, which takes place during the Divine Liturgy every Sunday and feast day.

At this meal, the Lord proclaims Himself as food to all His believers: "take, eat; this is My body." And "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood...for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:26-28). With this divine nourishment, the soul and body are cleansed from all sins. The Holy Gifts unite Christians with Christ and their participation in the heavenly Kingdom is ensured. This is exactly what is emphasized in the prayer of the Divine Liturgy (reading before the Lord's Prayer): "Lord,make us worthy to partake of Your heavenly and awesome Mysteries from this holy and spiritual Table with a clear conscience; for the remission of sins, forgiveness of transgressions, communion of the Holy Spirit, inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven...."

There is no greater reality in human life than our participation in the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, and no greater blessing and joy than when we live with Holy Communion. That is why the believer, who understands the benefit they receive with their union with Christ, leaves every other work behind on Sunday, and rushes to go to Church. It is here that they meet the Lord Jesus Christ, who is waiting to unite with them and offer His great blessings.

United with Christ here on earth, we will be worthy to hear in His Second Coming: "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Amen.

- *Metropolitan of Pisidia Sotirios*

Centring the Season on Christ

The story of the birth of Christ and its true significance is often clouded by the commercialism of the season. There is a very frenzied pace to these days which can so easily depersonalize us and dampen the true joy of the season. The stores tempt us for weeks on end to buy this thing or by that thing. Some of us prefer to speak of the 'Holiday Season' rather than of Christmas. Many schools have forbidden the remembrance of Christ's birth in the classroom. Yes, throughout our society, many fail to remember that the coming of Christ is truly at the heart of the Christmas celebrations.

What can we do? Let us remember that the season celebrates the love of God revealed in the coming of Christ. For those with faith, the coloured lights, the green trees, the wreaths and the flowers are the symbols of the joy of Christmas. Let us celebrate the joy of Christ's coming!

Let us share the love of God with others. Christ has come to bear witness to the Father's love for us. We too can share this love with others, especially with the poor and less fortunate among us. We can be sensitive to those who cannot easily celebrate because of a loss in their lives. Let us be the ambassadors of God who share His care and philanthropy.

Let us seek the Lord with an open heart as the shepherds and wise men did. This means that we find opportunities for prayer and meditation, for reading the Scriptures related to Christ's coming. This means that we can make Christmas a special day by participating in the Divine Liturgy and by receiving Holy Communion with reverence for God, with faith and with love.

To Christ Our Lord be glory, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.