





# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 17—23 NOVEMBER 2019

<b>SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER</b>	<b>9th SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 12: 16-21</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) 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.</div>	
<b>MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>8.45am</b> Service of Holy Unction</li><li>• <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.</li></ul>
<b>TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00pm</b> Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord, Coburg Youth Group will meet in our Church Hall.</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Vespers followed by Bible Study</li></ul>
<b>THURSDAY 21 NOVEMBER</b>  <b>Entry of the Theotokos to the Temple</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Vespers for St Iakovos Tsalikis</li><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>FRIDAY 22 NOVEMBER</b>  <b>St Iakovos Tsalikis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>SUNDAY 24 NOVEMBER</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Luke 18: 18-27</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: Ephesians 2: 4-10</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.

It is not the constant  
thought of their  
own sins,  
but the vision of the  
holiness of God,  
that makes the saints  
aware of their own  
sinfulness.

Metrop.  
Anthony Bloom

**St. Iakovos (Tsalikis) of Evia - Reposed November 21st 1991, Commemorated November 22nd**

### Wise Counsel from the Elder: (from Precious Vessels of the Holy Spirit)

- "We are not sanctified by the place in which we live, but by the way we live."
- "The faithful shouldn't tell others of things they have confessed, of details of their life or their spiritual endeavour."
- "Chase away the bad thoughts and fantasies that the devil presents. Don't even notice them."
- "Don't hesitate [to come to confession]. Don't be ashamed. Whatever you may have done, even the greatest of sins, the spiritual father has power from the Lord Christ Himself and from the Apostles to forgive you with his stole."
- "I asked God in prayer for the gift of discerning men's hearts by looking at their faces, so that I might be able to help them; and God granted it."

FOCUSING ON THE ONE THING NEEDFUL THIS ADVENT: HOMILY FOR THE ENTRANCE  
OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE (Luke 10: 38-42, 11: 27,28)

In an age of seemingly endless controversy and conflict in our society and world, it is easy to allow what is prominent in our culture to dominate our lives, our sense of who we are, and of what is ultimately most important. In other words, it is easy to make the world our temple and to offer our lives to its false gods. No matter what form it takes, that is simply idolatry. Today we celebrate a feast that invites us to a totally different way of living and thinking that is focused on offering ourselves to our Lord, and not to idols.

On the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, we remember that when the Virgin Mary was a little girl, her parents Joachim and Anna took her to live in the Temple in Jerusalem. They were an old, faithful, and barren couple who conceived miraculously and promised to offer their long-awaited child to God. She grew up in the Temple as she prepared to become the Living Temple of the Lord, when she agreed to become the Mother of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Theotokos" means Bearer or Mother of God, and she has this title because the One whom she bore, the One to whom she gave birth, is truly the eternal Son of God.

Because the Theotokos accepted Christ into her life in this unique way, every human being may now become His living temple. By taking His humanity from her, Jesus Christ has united every dimension of our life with His divinity. As the Second Adam, He has healed and restored all that went wrong with the first Adam. He has made us His temple already through his Incarnation. But our calling during this season of the Nativity Fast, of Advent, is not merely to acknowledge that we are His temple and then live according to the conventional standards of our, or any other, society. Instead, it is to become more faithful and pure temples so that we will be prepared to welcome Him with integrity into our lives this Christmas. And there is no better way to do that than by following the example of the Theotokos, who was by no means a powerful, famous, or conventionally influential person according to the standards of her culture.

The Church gives us gospel passages today that highlight her characteristics. When the Saviour visited their home, Lazarus' sister Martha was busy serving the guests, while his other sister Mary sat at Christ's feet and listened to His teachings. When Martha complained that her sister was not helping her, the Saviour told her that she was worried and troubled about many things; but only one thing is needed, and Mary had chosen to focus on that. In other words, Mary had focused on the Lord, on hearing His word, on responding to Him with faith. It was not wrong for Martha to serve her guests; the problem was that all her busyness had become a distraction from the one ultimately important thing of being fully attentive to Christ.

We also read in the gospel today that, when someone cried out, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts which nursed you!," Christ responded, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

These passages point to the Theotokos, for she certainly heard the word of God and kept it more than anyone else. She is uniquely blessed because she was prepared to respond in obedience to the astounding message of the Archangel that she was to become the mother of the Messiah. She welcomed Christ into her life in an unfathomable way.

With all our concerns about our society and world and about our own families and personal circumstances, it is difficult to follow the Theotokos' example of hearing and obeying the word of the Lord. It is easy to be distracted any time of year, but especially in the very busy weeks between now and Christmas. Nonetheless, we must follow her example for, if we are not careful, our attention will be diverted from the reason for the season, from the birth of our Saviour. We will not become better temples of the Lord by letting controversies, work, school, parties, shopping, or anything else, keep us from focusing on the one thing that is needful. In the midst of all these distractions, we must focus on Christ and welcome Him into even the dark and painful areas of our lives. We must refuse to allow earthly cares, no matter how appealing they are, to keep us from entering into the temple, to distract us from following the Theotokos in uniting every dimension of who we are to Christ.

That will be possible, however, only if we make a renewed commitment to prayer, which includes attending services faithfully and praying at home each day. It also includes praying silently whenever we have the opportunity. So instead of obsessively fuelling this or that fear, worry, or grudge, we should focus our minds on the Jesus Prayer as we call for Christ's mercy from our hearts. Instead of damning others with whom we disagree or who have offended us, we must ask God to bless and have mercy on them. Our Lord refused to become an earthly king or to define Himself in conventional worldly categories. He said that we must love our enemies, and He prayed from the Cross for His Father to forgive even those who had crucified Him. His Mother prepared to receive Him through prayer and purity in a way that had nothing to do with conventional assumptions about power and influence in that time and place. Likewise, we must make humble prayer the cornerstone of our life in order to find the strength to reject the false gods of our age and to choose "the one thing needful...that good part, which will not be taken away." Anything else is idolatry.

Even as we grow in prayer this Advent, we must remember that hearing the word of God and keeping it also has a lot to do with cleansing ourselves from all that is not holy, from all that does not belong in a temple. Thoughts, words, and deeds that we are ashamed to offer to Him for blessing should have no place in us. We should shut our eyes and ears to whatever inflames our passions. We should turn our attention away from thoughts of self-righteousness, anger, envy, and lust, and from all unholy temptations. We should go out of our way to love and bless our enemies and those whom we are inclined to think the worst of. We must become holy temples of the Lord by following the Theotokos' example of purity and obedience as we grow in our participation in God's holiness. That is why this season is a time for repentance, for confessing our sins in humility, for being assured of God's forgiveness, and then getting ourselves back on the right course.

It is also a time for eating a humble and simple diet that requires us to place limits on how we satisfy our stomachs and taste buds. We are all addicted to satisfying our self-centred desires in one way or another, and fasting is a tool for giving us strength in healing our passions and re-orienting our desires to God in a healthy way. The point is not legalism or that God simply wants us to be hungry of unsatisfied, but that we need to humble ourselves before the Lord as we gain the strength to offer every dimension of our lives to Him. Fasting is a powerful tool for helping us grow in holiness as more faithful living temples of Christ. Unless we have been advised by our spiritual father or physician not to fast from rich food, we should all make use of this tool for the healing of our souls.

The weeks of the Nativity Fast are a time of joyful preparation to receive Christ at His birth. They provide us an alternative to the angry and anxious ways of our culture. And on this Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, they call us to follow the example of someone very different from the ones people usually think are most important in life. We celebrate the Theotokos' entry into the Temple because that was the beginning of her personal formation as the one human being in all history who agreed to give life to Christ as His Mother, to become His Living Temple in a unique and astounding way. She was not an empress or from a wealthy or powerful family, but a young girl who focused on the one thing needful to the point that, by God's grace, she became the New Eve through whom the Saviour was born. God still works through humble, faithful people like her to accomplish His gracious purposes. My prayer for us all is that we will use the weeks of the Nativity Fast this year to follow her holy example. There is surely nothing more important that we could do for the salvation of the world, for the healing of our souls, and for preparing ourselves for the joy of Christmas.

- Fr. Philip LeMasters