



Parish Information Bulletin

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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.

The evil one cannot
comprehend the joy
we receive from the
spiritual life;
for this reason he is
jealous of us,
he envies us and sets
traps for us,
and we become
grieved and fall.

We must struggle,
because without
struggles we do not
obtain virtues.



Elder Ieronymos
of Aegina

SUNDAY 14 JUNE

SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS, Matthew 10: 32-33, 37-38, 19: 27-30

• 8.00am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy

MONDAY 15 JUNE

FAST FOR THE APOSTLES BEGINS.

SUNDAY 21 JUNE

Epistle Reading: Romans 2: 10-16

Gospel Reading: Matthew 4: 18-23

St Nikolai Velimirovic asks us to ponder on :

THE ACTION OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON THE APOSTLES:

- ◇ How the apostles, led by the Holy Spirit, travelled throughout the world, without means and without friends.
- ◇ How they brought both rich and poor to the Christian faith by their words, lives and miracles alone.
- ◇ How the Holy Spirit led the apostles through all sorrows and trials, filling their hearts with consolation and joy.
- ◇ How the Holy Spirit made those seeds of the Gospel that the apostles sowed throughout the world grow and flourish, even in places where it seemed that they were sown in vain.
- ◇ How the Holy Spirit gave the apostles insight into the hidden things of the other world.
- ◇ How the Holy Spirit gave the apostles insight into the hearts of men.
- ◇ How the Holy Spirit wonderfully directed the apostles' feet into distant lands.
- ◇ How He wonderfully brought them back from these distant lands to Jerusalem for the funeral of the most holy Mother of God.

THE ACTION OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON THE MARTYRS FOR THE FAITH:

- ◇ How the Holy Spirit gave them wisdom to speak before their judges.
- ◇ How the Holy Spirit gave them courage to perish on the scaffold.
- ◇ How the Holy Spirit gave them comfort in their sufferings.
- ◇ How at times, by His will, their bodies were made untouchable by fire.

PONDERING ON GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE INSPIRER WITH WISDOM AND TRUTH:

- ◇ Of the prophets, evangelists and apostles, who wrote the Holy Scriptures by His inspiration and guidance.
- ◇ Of the holy fathers, who interpreted the Holy Scriptures by His inspiration and guidance.

AS THE INSPIRER OF MEEKNESS AND GRACE:

- ◇ How He has inspired ascetics and monks with meekness and grace throughout the ages.
- ◇ How He has inspired, and today inspires, all truly repentant souls with meekness and grace.

- St Nikolai Velimerovic, *The Prologue from Ochrid*

All Saints: What We All Should Strive to Be

Today in the Church, the first Sunday after Pentecost, we honour all the saints of our Church. Last Sunday we commemorated the coming of God's Holy Spirit on the world, and today we commemorate all those who were transformed by the Holy Spirit and who are the holy ones of God – the saints.

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Saints are models of transformation. They are people just like all of us, who lived in this world. They show us it is possible to follow Christ, to be a Christian, even fully united to and transformed by Christ in this world, in our lifetime – despite the world and the times we live in!

The icons of saints, which we see in our churches and homes, do not offer to us picture perfect portraits of these men and women as they would have been seen in this world, but rather offer us a glimpse of these Christians as deified humans, as humans residing in the Kingdom even when they are portrayed on earth. They help us to see people as God sees them – holy, in God's image and likeness, spiritual and spirit-filled. Icons are reminding us that there is far more to any human than what the eye can normally see. For the saints are humans who shine with the divine light, who reveal to us the image of God, who show us what it means for a human to be united to God, to attain theosis.

Jesus asked His disciples, *"Who do you say that I am?"* (Matthew 16:15) The answer is revealed in the lives of the saints, who lived for Christ and who revealed the kingdom in this world in their lives. For Christ is the One who deifies humanity. What the saints lived for, struggled with, suffered for, tells us who they believed Jesus to be – the incarnate Lord, God and Saviour. The saints reveal Christ not only in what they taught but in their very being and in how they lived and died.

Christ's question, *"Who do you say that I am?"*, gives rise to a second – *"Who do you say **you** are?"* or we can turn the question around and ask our self, *"Who am I?"* For in answering the question about who we think Christ is, we come to the answer for the second, who am I? – a disciple of Christ, a child of God, a member of the Body of Christ, one of God's chosen people, one of the redeemed, someone united to God.

In the saints we see people from all walks of life united to Christ – males, females, children, even teenagers! Housewives, business people, students, soldiers, government officials, labourers, leaders, teachers, doctors, merchants, farmers, slaves, wealthy, poor, the educated and the illiterate. Christ dwelling in people with diverse personalities, differently gifted and educated, with various talents and differing incomes. People deified by Christ, and those just beginning to follow Him. Terrible sinners who repented and people who had spent a lifetime devoted to Christ.

Each and everyone of you is capable in your own life of being a Christ-bearer, of having Christ dwell in you. Christ does not wait until you are morally perfect before uniting Himself to you. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). You can at any time invite Christ into your hearts – you are capable of making room in your hearts for Christ today and at every moment of your life. In fact we are all and always either making room for Christ in our hearts or expelling him from our hearts by what we think, say and do. And none of that is dependent on the status of your life – those things laid upon you at birth over which you had no control – gender, skin colour, native language, wealth, social status, IQ, or personality. Christ stands at the door of every heart and seeks entry into our hearts. It is our decision as to whether we let Him in or not.

God's love is extended to everyone, and to all people, even to people we don't like.

The goal of the Christian life is not to make the world more 'believer friendly' but to build up in ourselves a willingness to serve God and live faithfully no matter what the cost to ourselves, no matter how others may view us. Our challenge is to be able to pass along to the next generation the Faith and the desire to take up the cross to follow Christ (Mark 8:34). We have to show some joy and zeal for being disciples and bearing our crosses so that those who observe us will want to join us and have in their hearts what we have in ours.

Our spiritual warfare happens not mostly in church or when we are at prayer, though it does happen there too. Our spiritual warfare is most real when we are watching entertainment on our computers or TVs, or when we listen to music, or are tempted by pornography, or lured by political trash talking. Holiness exists when we choose how to spend our time or what to fill our hearts and minds with. Where our treasure is there will be our heart (Luke 12:34).

To whom do we give our allegiance? Who is the Lord whom we obey? This is the real spiritual warfare. And this battle occurs wherever we are – at home, at work, at school, on the beach, in a restaurant. Will I accept any thought that comes into my head, or will I let Jesus Christ be Lord of my heart, mind, thoughts and feelings? Will I be willing to repent of those things in my heart which are so dear to me and define my sense of self but which Christ defines as sin? Will I believe everything I think, or will I submit all to the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The spiritual life is a life of accountability. We have to give account to God for all we think, do, believe, say, watch, listen to, repeat, copy, imitate. We should be giving account to one another – to our spouses, to our father confessor, our sponsors and godparents, our brothers and sisters in Christ, our fellow parishioners. We are responsible for the health of the parish – when one suffers, we all suffer and when one is glorified we all are glorified (1 Corinthians 12:26).

We are not called to be a political force in the world. We are called to witness to the presence of the Kingdom of God in our lives. The battle between good and evil is not really out in the world, in our politics, or philosophical proclivities. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote: *"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"* The battle between good and evil takes place in your heart! It is not a war that we read about in some distant land, we feel it within ourselves. The battle is won or lost in each of our hearts, on a daily basis.

Look at your calendars and your schedules on your cell phones. What time have you intentionally planned for God in your daily lives? How is God present in your home, in your dining room, in your bedroom, in your office? We train ourselves to use computers and technology, to be better cooks, engineers, parents, we learn about health and physical fitness. What are you doing to be a better disciple of Christ?

What time do you devote to repentance? For Jesus called all of us to repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near. This is how we become the saints of God. Holy things are for the holy ones, and you are to change your lives to be the holy ones of God. Holiness is not just something imposed on you from heaven, it emerges from the battle in your heart, and then emanates to the world through how you live, what you say and what you do.

- Fr Ted