



## Parish Information Bulletin

**SUNDAY 19 JULY**  
*Macrina the Righteous,*  
*Sister of St Basilios*

**SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS, Matthew 5: 14-19**

- **8.00am**  
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

**MONDAY 20 JULY**  
*Prophet Elias the Tishbite*

- **8.00am**  
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

**SUNDAY 26 JULY**

**Epistle Reading: Galatians 3: 23-29, 4: 1-5**  
**Gospel Reading: Matthew 9: 27-35**

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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.

If you find that  
there is no love  
in you,  
but you want to  
have it,  
then do deeds  
of love,  
even though you  
do them without  
love in the  
beginning.  
The Lord will see  
you desire and  
striving  
and will put love  
in your heart.



St. Ambrose of  
Optina

### Zeal of Faith— The Holy Prophet Elijah (Elias), the Tishbite

A prophet of the ninth century BC, Elijah the Tishbite is remembered in Scripture and Christian tradition as the foremost example of zealous loyalty to the living God. He lived during the reign of Ahab, King of Israel (Northern Kingdom, 875-854 BC) and Ahab's pagan wife Jezebel who tried to introduce the religion of Baal to the Jews. Because of his uncompromising struggle against paganism, his miraculous deeds, and his ascension into heaven on a flaming chariot, Elijah gained the stature of the "pillar of prophets." His fame grew until he was expected to return from heaven as the forerunner of the Day of Lord (Mal. 4:5; Wis. Sir. 48:10). As the representative of the prophets, he appeared together with Moses at the transfiguration of Christ (Mk. 9:4-5).

The story of Elijah and his zeal for the God of Israel is told in 1 Kings, chapters 17-18. After announcing to Ahab a severe drought, the prophet hid himself by a brook and was fed by ravens. This is how he is usually depicted in his icons. Later he left Israel and stayed with a foreign widow and her son near Sidon, their food being provided by the jar of meal and cruse of oil which were miraculously unspent during the time of the drought. When the widow's son died or was near death, Elijah restored the boy to life (1 Kings 17:10-24).

The dramatic moment came when Elijah confronted Ahab with apostasy and challenged the priests of Baal to a contest—to decide whether the Lord or Baal was true God. All gathered on Mount Carmel and Elijah said to the people of Israel: "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God/follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). From morning until noon, four hundred and fifty priests of Baal prayed to their god and danced around their altar in frenzy, cutting themselves with lances and swords, but no fire from heaven came to burn the sacrificial animal. After this Elijah asked that water be poured over his altar and he prayed to God with profound trust to let it be known that He was the God of Israel. In the words of 1 Kings 18:38-39:

Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God."

### Our Holy Mother Righteous Macrina.

The eldest sister of St Basil the Great and St Gregory of Nyssa, she was as a girl betrothed to a young nobleman and, when her betrothed died, Macrina vowed never to enter into marriage, saying: 'It is not right for a girl, having once been betrothed, to turn to another; according to natural law there must be one marriage, as there are one birth and one death.' She justified this by her belief in the resurrection of the dead, regarding her betrothed not as dead, but as alive in God. 'It is a sin and a shame', she said, 'if the spouse does not keep faith when the partner goes to distant climes.' Then, with her mother Emilia, she became a nun in a monastery of virgins, where she lived in asceticism with the other nuns. They lived by the work of their hands, devoting the greater part of their time to pondering on God, to prayer and to a ceaseless lifting-up of their minds to Him. After a time, her mother died, and then her brother Basil. In the ninth month after Basil's death, Gregory came to visit his sister and found her on her deathbed. At the time of her death, Macrina made this prayer to God: 'Thou, O Lord, givest rest to our bodies in the sleep of death for a little time, then Thou wilt waken them again with the Last Trump. Forgive me, and grant that, when my soul is parted from my body, it may be presented before Thee stainless and without sin, and that it may be as incense before Thee.' She then made the sign of the Cross on her brow, eyes, face and heart, and breathed her last. She entered into rest in the Lord in 379.

**The World Needs Light, Not More Darkness**  
**Homily for the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in the Orthodox Church**

It is not hard to find examples of Christians whose behaviour disappoints and scandalizes us. Whether people we know personally or simply those we know about, it is easy to find ourselves thinking that others hardly seem to be “the light of the world.” There is a powerful temptation, of course, to point our finger at others for not beaming radiantly with the holy light of our Lord. Before we even begin to think about how our neighbours are doing, however, we must first take a painfully honest look at our own souls. For when we see ourselves clearly in the brilliant light of our Lord’s holiness, the darkness within us will become quite apparent. Instead of welcoming into our hearts judgmental thoughts about how others are filled with darkness, we must focus on exposing our own diseased souls to the healing presence of the Lord. Otherwise, we will become just like the hypocritical, self-righteous judges who rejected the Saviour.

Most of us are very good, however, at finding ways to hide in the darkness. Like the people St. Paul described in his letter to St. Titus, we would rather focus on foolish arguments and disputes that “are unprofitable and futile.” Instead of investing our time and energy in “good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need,” we obsess about problems beyond our control and fall into fantasy about the wickedness of those we consider to be our enemies and the bad things that might happen to us in the future. This way of thinking is simply an invitation to weaken ourselves spiritually to the point that we will shed no light at all in our darkened world. It leads to shutting the light of Christ out of our souls in ways that result inevitably in slavery to the darkness. When we live that way, we will be anything but a lamp that draws others to give glory to God. Instead, we will scandalize and disappoint our neighbours by our poor witness for Christ.

Today we commemorate the Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. They proclaimed that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human, one Person Who unites in Himself both divinity and humanity. They were not concerned with abstract points of theology, but with the pressing need to reject false teachings that made it impossible to proclaim how the Son of God could bring corrupt human beings into eternal life. Apart from a Saviour Who is both fully divine and fully one of us, we would remain lost in the darkness of this world. We need the God-Man to bring us into His light.

Unfortunately, there remains much within us that would rather hide from the light of Christ. In contrast to His brilliance, we do not want our darkness to be exposed. Consequently, we often would rather that He were merely a great religious personality, moral teacher, or political leader than the God-Man. Then we could more easily convince ourselves that we are already holy because we serve some cause that operates according to the corrupt standards of our world of darkness. Or we could rest easy that we have this virtue or have done that good deed, which at least makes us better than whoever we view as our enemies. How dangerous and subtle is the temptation to blind ourselves to the truth about where we stand before God by convincing ourselves that we are on the side of the angels because we have built ourselves up by putting others down. If there is no higher standard than how we think we compare to others or how we serve what is popular in our time and place, then it will not be hard to convince ourselves that we really do not need much of a Saviour.

If we go down that road, however, we will never become the light of the world. Our lives will not be different from what is conventional in our society. Instead of becoming radiant with the holy light of Christ, we will simply embody the darkness that the world already knows all too well. There is already too much so-called Christianity that does precisely that. No matter what we say we believe, we must unite ourselves to Christ in holiness in order to avoid turning the faith into some kind self-serving religious ideology that will illumine no one.

In complete contrast to such idolatry, the Saviour called His disciples to embody a righteousness that exceeded that of the hypocritical religious legalists who had distorted the faith of Israel in order to build up their own worldly power. He fulfilled the Old Testament law in a way that demanded purity of heart, that invited people to become “perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48) Instead of congratulating themselves for not murdering others, His disciples were to find healing for the anger and hatred that are at the root of broken human relationships. Instead of resting content with avoiding physical adultery, they were to turn away from lust and all unholy sexual desire. Instead of believing they were justified in responding in kind to their enemies, they were to love and forgive them.

Christ could speak to His disciples in this way because He is not simply a teacher giving them a code of conduct that they could interpret according to conventional standards. No, He is the God-Man and described what it means to share personally in His life, to be become radiant with His holy light like an iron left in the fire of the divine glory. Our Saviour, fully divine and fully human, invites us to nothing less than that.

No wonder, then, that as we see ourselves more clearly in His light, we will become more aware of the darkness that remains within us. That experience often presents the temptation to distract ourselves from the uncomfortable truth that we need healing beyond what we had previously imagined and that we cannot give ourselves. Some abandon the spiritual life at this point, thinking that there is no hope for them at all. Others fill their minds with “stupid controversies” that “are unprofitable and futile” as ways of taking their attention off their own brokenness. For example, being constantly angry at others or identifying the faith with worldly agendas that do not require the healing of the soul are appealing ways of ignoring our need for growth in holiness.

Far better, however, is to use every glimpse of the darkness in our souls for our salvation by opening ourselves more fully to the healing light of Christ. Frequent use of the Jesus Prayer, regular Confession, and embracing the humility expressed in the prayers of preparation to receive the Eucharist are powerful means of gaining the strength to offer our brokenness to the Lord for healing. The same is true of asking forgiveness of those we have wronged, forgiving those who have wronged us, fasting according to our spiritual and physical strength, and going out of our way to serve the lonely, sick, and needy.

Ultimately, our choice is either to remain in the darkness or to enter more fully into the light of the God-Man. He alone can transform us from those blinded by our usual distractions to those who shine like an illumined city on a hill as a sign of the world’s salvation. So instead of finding ways to excuse or justify ourselves, let us have the courage to see our darkness in His light and to refuse to let anything hold us back from being illumined until we shine brightly with the Light of the world, our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Fr. Philip LeMasters