



Parish Information Bulletin

SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER

First Sunday of Luke, Luke 5: 1-11

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY 3 OCTOBER

St Dionysios the Areopagite

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER

Epistle Reading: 2 Corinthians 6: 16—7:1

Gospel Reading: Luke 6: 31-36

Telephone Contact Numbers

St Vasilios Church
9387 7693

Fr Athanasios
9383 4151

Fr Ephraim
0490 378 215

Website:
stvasiliosbrunswick.com

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.

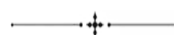
St Dionysios the Areopagite

The Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite, Bishop of Athens lived originally in the city of Athens. He was raised there and received a classical Greek education. He then went to Egypt, where he studied astronomy at the city of Heliopolis. It was in Heliopolis, along with his friend Apollonophonos where he witnessed the solar eclipse that occurred at the moment of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ by Crucifixion. "Either the Creator of all the world now suffers, or this visible world is coming to an end," Dionysius said. Upon his return to Athens from Egypt, he was chosen to be a member of the Areopagus Council (Athenian high court).

When St Paul preached in Athens, at the place on the Hill of Ares (Acts 17:16-34), Dionysius accepted his salvific proclamation. Dionysius was among the first to believe. and became a Christian.

For three years St Dionysius remained a companion of the holy Apostle Paul in preaching the word of God, and became either the first (according to some) Bishop of Athens, or the second, succeeding St Hierotheos (commemorated October 4).

With St Hierotheos he was present at the Dormition of the Mother of God. He received a martyr's end in his old age, possibly in Athens. Several famous works of mystical theology, including *On the Divine Names*, are attributed to him.



What Catching Fish and Beholding the Divine Glory Have in Common

One of the great blessings of children is to have a sense of wonder. Those of us who have been around the block a few times, however, easily fall into the mindset of taking things for granted, of thinking that we have seen it all before, and allowing nothing to shake us up. Consequently, we often shut our eyes to the great blessings all around us and even to the presence of the Lord in our lives.

Whether St. Peter had lost his sense of wonder before he countered Jesus Christ, we do not know. But like any professional fisherman, he certainly thought that putting out his nets one more time after a night of catching nothing would be a waste of time. That is basically what he told the Lord, but in obedience to Him, he did so nonetheless. And all of a sudden, the nets were breaking and the boats were sinking due to the huge catch of fish.

St. Peter's surprise is shown by what he did next. He fell down before Christ and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" In other words, he knew that he had seen nothing like this before. His eyes were opened to the wonder of the situation and his own inadequacy before it. He knew in his soul that what had happened was not simply about nets, fish, and boats, but about what it means to encounter the Lord as someone unworthy to do so. Despite all his failings and weaknesses, St. Peter had the spiritual clarity of the Prophet Isaiah when he had a vision of God in the heavenly temple (Isa. 6:5): "Woe is me, because I am pierced to the heart, for being a man and having unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips; for I saw the King,

..../

Human life extends
cyclically through
the years,
months, weeks,
days and nights,
hours and minutes.
Through these periods
we should extend
our ascetic labours
— our watchfulness,
our prayer,
our sweetness
of heart,
our diligent stillness
— until our departure
from this life.



*Saint Hesychios
the Priest*

the Lord of hosts, with my own eyes.” Before the glory of God, they both responded with humility.

St. Peter’s day probably had begun like any other day, full of hard work with no expectation for anything out of the ordinary. Like all of us, those fishermen went about their familiar routines with their usual responsibilities and concerns. Everything seemed perfectly normal, but then the Lord blessed them and enabled them to see that their work was not simply about fish, but about bringing people into the eternal life of the Kingdom of God. Something as ordinary as catching fish became a heavenly vision. Imagine that.

When St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he was dealing with other matters. He had to remind a bunch of confused Gentile converts to separate themselves from evil, cleanse themselves from defilement, and “make holiness perfect in the fear of God.” He told them to turn away from sexual immorality, idolatry, and other corrupt practices. Many today face similar challenges, perhaps in part because we have lost our sense of wonder at God’s presence in our lives. In other words, we think of our routines, our relationships, our temptations, and our blessings as simply the way things are. We adjust to them, take them for granted, and do not open the eyes of our souls to what God may be calling us to do and to become in relation to them. Consequently, we lose hope that He will transform our seemingly futile struggles into abundant joy. We despair of finding healing for our souls. We think that our nets will always be empty and that each day will be like the one before. And because we so easily lose hope, we are not inclined to obey the Lord like St. Peter did in letting down our nets down just one more time.

If you think about it, that is all that the Lord ever asks of us. One day at a time, to be faithful. One day at a time, to say “no” to our self-centred desires. One day at a time, to recognize that we always live in the presence of the burning bush of His divine glory, that we are always on holy ground.

This past week we celebrated the Feast of the Conception of St. John the Forerunner. Even though his father Zacharias was a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple, he had apparently lost his sense of wonder before the holiness of God. So when the Archangel Gabriel told him that he and Elizabeth were to conceive a child in their old age, he responded with doubt—apparently forgetting about Abraham and Sarah, who also miraculously conceived late in life. Even as he was burning incense in the temple, he had shut his eyes to the divine glory. Perhaps not being able to speak again until after birth of John helped to set him straight and to see his long-awaited son as God’s gracious gift which he did not deserve.

His example shows us that the Lord is at work in our lives in ways that have nothing to do with what we deserve. The Bible is filled with other similar stories. Not long after being blessed by God to be the father of a great nation, Abraham gave away his wife Sarah to Pharaoh out of fear. That could have stopped the story of the Hebrew people even as it began, but God worked through him anyway. Right after being called through the burning bush, Moses thought of every excuse imaginable to get out of leading the Hebrews away from Egypt. Nonetheless, God still used him. Even after the Lord explained His identity and ministry quite clearly to St. Peter, the chief disciple denied Him three times and abandoned Him at His crucifixion. Regardless, Christ still called him. The great Apostle Paul was a dedicated persecutor of Christians until the Risen Lord miraculously appeared to Him in a blinding light on the road to Damascus. That horrible past did not, however, keep St. Paul from becoming a great saint and missionary.

The lesson for us is clear: We must not use our sins, failings, weaknesses, or life circumstances as excuses to say that God is not present and active in our lives. He always has and continues to call sinners like me and you to serve Him. His blessing is not for a select few, but for all He creates in His image and likeness, for all who are called to faith in Jesus Christ, regardless of our ancestry, the nature of our personal struggles or temptations, or the history of our own personal brokenness.

If we will only open the eyes of our souls, we will behold His glory and blessing shining as brightly as a burning bush in ways that may be as surprising as a huge catch of fish that threatens to break our nets and sink our boats. If we only have the eyes to see, we will know His presence so powerfully that we will fall before Him like St. Peter with a sense of our own inadequacy before His holiness and abundant mercy.

Granted, all this might seem easier to accept if God worked an obvious miracle in a spectacular fashion. But if that happened, would our faith really grow and mature? Would we ever learn to view God as anything other than a genie that grants our wishes? He is not the one in this relationship who needs to change. We must patiently do our part to clarify our spiritual vision, to open the eyes of our souls to what the Lord is already doing. Very often the point is not for God to change an outward circumstance, but for us to find the spiritual strength to recognize the wonder of His presence already in our lives. For as with the Prophet Elijah, God usually does not speak to us through earthquake, wind, and fire, but through the still small voice of a gentle breeze. (3 Kingdoms 19:11ff./ 1 Kings 19:11ff)

We will never hear His voice, however, if we do not listen, which requires praying from our hearts on a regular basis. If we do not shut out the distractions of our own thoughts and the pointless chatter of our culture each day, we will not be able to hear Him tell us to let down our nets just one more time, to take the next small step of faithfulness, or to resist a seemingly insurmountable temptation. We will never fall before the Lord in humble gratitude for His countless blessings unless we gain the spiritual clarity necessary to recognize His gracious presence already in our daily lives, even in what is most familiar, routine, and taken for granted. If we will only develop the eyes to recognize His blessing and calling, then each and every one of us will acquire a new sense of wonder that will bring us to our knees in thanksgiving and humility. That is how we, like so many other unworthy people before us, will find a power and peace in our lives that we do not deserve, but that we will wonder how we ever lived without.

- Fr. Philip LeMasters