



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 11—17 July 2021

SUNDAY 11 JULY
Great-Martyr
St Euphemia

3rd SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 6: 22-33

- 7.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy

2021 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 10.30am 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.

MONDAY 12 JULY
St Paisios the Athonite

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY 17 JULY
Great-Martyr
St Marina

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 18 JULY

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 5: 14-19

EPISTLE READING: Titus 3: 8-15

LESSONS FROM ST PAISIOS THE ATHONITE

Central to Elder Paisios' spiritual life were the virtues of love, humility, and sacrifice. Depicted in his icon is a scroll in his hand which contains one of his well-known sayings, *"Love and humility are the frequency in which God works"* – meaning that we should turn the dial of our heart to the frequency of love and humility, so that God can work in us. He often described how our ego and selfishness push away God and those whom we love.

Saint Paisios also talked about the importance of sacrifice and struggle. Through these we are able to break down our ego and draw closer to God. *"The soft life makes people useless. Without toil*

and struggle sanctification doesn't come." He warned about the dangers of modern life with its conveniences and comforts. Though these comforts appear to help us, they instead make us more distracted, busier, and anxious – external noise contributing to internal discord. This thoughtful and relevant statement by Saint Paisios is especially poignant, as he observed this even before the internet, smart phones, and social media!

The increasing materialism of the modern world caused Saint Paisios great anguish. He warned that when we focus on material possessions we only become worried, anxious, and deadened to the spiritual life. *"The person who is possessed by material things is always subjugated to unhappiness and anxiety: he trembles for fear that his things will be taken away from him."* The Elder likened the materialistic person to a young bird in the shell who never comes out to *"the heavenly flight in the life of Paradise,"* but just stays in the shell and dies. He warned, *"Fly from your material possessions to the fold of the poor. Simplify your life so as to be freed from worldly anxiety, so that your life might have meaning."*

Saint Paisios had great love and compassion for people living in the modern world. He prayed continually and used his God-given gifts of discernment and foresight to guide those who would visit him. He never berated people, but always encouraged them, giving hope in place of desperation. *"My heart rejoices when I see souls who take heed and struggle in a world that has become full of little devils."*

May Saint Paisios continue to intercede for all of us!

A Sermon on the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost (Matthew 6:22-33)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, the Scripture is full of questions, commands, warnings, promises, and consequences for actions. All of these, *every single one of them*, applies to us. You must read the Scripture and answer the questions and listen to the commands and heed the warnings and realize they are for you.

Now, this reading today for the cycle, for the third Sunday after Pentecost, about the body and the eye and the light of the body being the eye, has two important questions in it.

Here is one: the Lord says: Is not life more than meat and the body more than raiment?" That question is a very important one to answer, and it's one that actually is answered hundreds of times every day by every person, whether they are Christian or not, whether or not they believe in God.

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.

And with it is the question that follows: “And why do you take thought for your clothing?” And then the Lord goes on to tell about the lilies of the field and some commands about how we should act and what we should do.

None of this makes any sense to anyone unless we answer this first question well. This question can be also stated: What is life all about? Most people get this question wrong, because the way to Hell is broad. The people that answer this question wrong think of life in terms of what is happening in front of them, what they will be doing or what they have done or what they are planning. They think in terms of being a good father or mother or having wealth or having insurance for their old age or whatever - worldly concerns. We’re not talking now about bad people, just earthly, worldly people. They are everywhere; the Lord speaks of them all the time. Remember the parable about the tares? That’s about worldly people. Remember the parable about the sower and the seed? It talks about worldly people also.

You must answer this question the right way if you are to be able to follow the Lord’s admonitions about not being worried for tomorrow and seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness. We can’t do it *unless we truly believe that life is to know God and know Him intimately, and that is the only important answer to every question.*

So, when the Lord says, is life more than food and the body more than clothing; of course this should be self-evident to us; life is ordered in order to know God. So everything you do should be to know God. And the way you think determines who you are. This is what the Lord is speaking of when He says, the light of the body is the eye; because the eye sees and desires. What you desire is *who you are*, no matter how much Scripture you know or anything else that you accomplish in life. What you see and desire is what you are, and it affects your soul. This is very critically important for us to understand. The eye determines where the soul goes. So your eye must desire to see God.

Now, the Lord gives many admonitions after He asks us these questions. Some of these are very hard. Maybe this particular day they’re not so tough, but tomorrow there will be something that’s really hard in your life, and it will be very hard to think only of God and to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, because you have got so much else going around you. You have got worries about this and concerns about that, and distractions, and everyone’s pulling you in different directions. All this stuff is going on, so it’s very, very hard.

So how is it that we can have such a mind that we would seek first His kingdom and His righteousness? Well, the answer to this question comes in two parts. The incorrect answer comes in a million different ways. But the correct answer is, first of all: All that matters is God. Life is to know God. But then the important second answer is: I must do everything I can to learn this and to become this and to be this. It doesn’t come necessarily easily to us, because we forget. This is why the Lord repeats over and over basically the same thing. He talks about the lilies of the field, and He talks about the grass. He’s saying the same thing. And He says, take no thought about what we should eat or drink or how shall we be clothed. It’s all the same thing. He’s saying: Don’t take thought for worldly things. Think of spiritual things. Why does He say it over and over? Because we forget over and over.

So we must cultivate in ourselves this thought that life is for God and life is to know God. It’s not enough to know this to be able to answer the question correctly. It is not enough even to believe it very deeply in your heart. You must cultivate this understanding over and over and over again, by how you live, by what you do.

This is why I as a pastor am grieved when I see that some of you don’t come to church often, don’t commune and confess often. I don’t just want to see a bunch of people in church. I want you to cultivate in your heart the love of God. And there are a lot of things competing against this love of God, not the least of which is your own flesh which turns towards evil quite easily.

So you must cultivate in yourself this love. You must force yourself, not only to say your formal prayers and to fast when you don’t want to fast and to come to church, but also to have in your life that the purpose of your life is God, is to know Him. And so whatever it is that you can do that you know Him better, that is a good thing. And anything that doesn’t help you know Him better, is a worthless thing and an evil thing.

And that’s why I as a pastor, like probably every pastor there is, asks his flock to come to church more frequently, to confess, to commune, to read the Scriptures, to fast - not because these things are on your checklist of things that you have to do, but because the purpose of your life is to know God.

How can you know God unless you strive to be like Him? Unless you pray to Him? Unless you order your life according to His commandments? It doesn’t happen. How can you know God unless you recognize that in your life, today, you will answer this question: Is not life more than meat? And the body more than raiment? A thousand times. And everything you do is a decision. Everything you do is a value judgment. There are *no neutral things*. There’s nothing that does not matter. Everything matters. The way you think, the way you talk, the way you are with people, your values, your judgments, your priorities, how you spend your time, what you read. Everything matters. And everything must be for the purpose of knowing God. This is what this Scripture is telling us today.

The Lord uses this imagery of the eye. He’s not talking about our human eyes. He is talking about our soul, and He is talking about our desire. The Lord gave us intense desire. We have this capacity in us to desire, that can be used for good or it can be used for evil. It’s easy to use it for evil. It is difficult to use it for good until you have become so accustomed to tasting the good and avoiding the evil, that it could not occur to you to do anything else. That’s what the apostle talks about in his letter that when we become such that we love God so much that we do not sin.

Brothers and sisters, answer this question all the time. Hear this question; *look* for this question in your heart. It’s happening all the time whether you know it or not, and you should know it. And then answer this second question: Why do you take thought for raiment, for food or troubles or the test that’s coming up or your job or whatever? Why do you take thought for these things instead of Godly things? The answer is simple: Because of lack of faith, because of weakness in your soul.

So do what you can to make yourself strong. Pray and fast and have in your mind’s eye what is important in life. There’s only one thing. *There’s only one answer to every question, and that is to know Jesus Christ and God the Father.* It’s the only answer. It’s all that matters.

May God help you to feel this question deeply in your heart every moment of the day and to answer it always:
Lord, Here I am. May God help you. Amen.

St Marina, Great Martyr Kontakion

Adorned with the beauty of virginity, you have been crowned with unfading crowns, O Marina.
Having shed your blood in holy martyrdom, and radiant with the miracles of healing,
you have received from the hand of your Creator the prize of victory.