



## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program for 25 July— 31 July 2021

**SUNDAY 25 JULY**  
**Dormition of St Anna**

**5th SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 8: 28-34, 9:1**  
• **8.00am**—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 26 JULY**  
**St Paraskevi**

• **8.00am**  
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

**TUESDAY 27 JULY**  
**St Panteleimon, Great-Martyr**

• **8.00am**  
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

**SUNDAY 1 AUGUST**

**GOSPEL READING: Matthew 9: 1-8**  
**EPISTLE READING: Romans 12: 6-14**

### 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.

### Saint Paraskevi the Virgin Martyr

by Saint Kosmas Aitolos

Let us say something about the good earth. St. Paraskevi was a twelve year old maiden from a noble house. Left an orphan, she divided up all her possessions among the poor, and with these she purchased Paradise.

In place of cosmetics, she wore tears, remembering her sins. In place of earrings, she kept her ears open to hear the Sacred Scriptures. In place of a necklace, she fasted often, which made her neck

shine like the sun. In place of rings, she acquired calluses on her fingers from the many prostrations she made. In place of a golden belt, she had her virginity which she guarded all her life. In place of a dress, she was covered by modesty and fear of God. This is how the Saint decked herself.

If there is any maiden who wishes to adorn herself, let her consider what this Saint did and let her do the same if she wishes to be saved.

In this way, brethren, St. Paraskevi acquired learning and became very wise. Because of her purity, God found her worthy to perform miracles. She cured the blind, the deaf and she raised the dead.

Two Jews, sons of the devil, seeing the Saint perform miracles, envied her and betrayed her to King Antoninus as a Christian. So the King summoned her and asked her to deny Christ and to worship the gods and she would become queen.

The Saint replied: "I am not foolish like you to deny my Christ and to go to the devil; to leave life and go to death. May you leave the darkness and come to the light."

Do you hear, my brethren, how outspoken a young girl was before a king?

Whoever has Christ in his heart fears nothing in the world. If we too wish not to fear either people or demons, let us have God in our hearts.

The King said to the Saint: "I'll give you three days to obey; if you don't I'll put you to death."

The Saint replied: "O King, what you wish to do in three days time, do it now, for I will not deny my Christ."

The King then ordered a big fire to be lighted and over it a large pot was placed, filled with tar and sulphur. Seeing the pot, the Saint rejoiced, for she was to depart from this false world and to go to that which is real and eternal.

The King ordered the Saint to be put into the pot to be boiled. The Saint made the sign of the Cross and got in the pot. The king waited two, three hours and seeing she was not being boiled, he said: "Paraskevi, why aren't you burning?"

The Saint said: "Because Christ cooled the water and I don't burn."

The King replied: "Sprinkle me with the water so I can see whether it burns or not."

The Saint took some water in her two hands and threw it into his face, and immediately behold the miracle – he became blind and his face was flayed.

The King then shouted: "Great is the God of the Christians. In him I also believe. Come out and baptize me."

The Saint got out and baptized him and his entire kingdom. Later another king beheaded her and she went to Paradise to rejoice forever.

This woman yielded a hundred-fold, according to the Lord's word.

That Christ came into the world to enter into the fray on our behalf is obvious in today's Gospel lesson:

*And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"*

*Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine." And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighbourhood. And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. (Matthew 8:28-9:1)*

The Gospel lesson shows Christ active in the world, not enthroned in the comfort and safety of heaven, and not just piously praying in the temple. It is a lesson about Christ engaging evil face to face in a desolate place where most humans have decided not to go. Christ is God's presence and power in the world casting out the forces of Satan from the lives of two rather unsavoury men.

Whether we think in these terms or not, we ourselves come to church in order to personally experience that presence of the Kingdom in our lives, to commit ourselves to the Kingdom of God and to show our own rejection of all that is evil. Our presence at the Liturgy is not withdrawal from the world, nor fleeing the real presence of evil in the world, but rather adding ourselves to the spiritual war against Satan. Throughout the Liturgy we are praying for and about the world and all that is in the world. We unite ourselves to Christ in order to defeat Satan in our own lives so that we can be what Christ expects of us:

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-14)*

In the Gospel, it is obvious that Christ does not just talk to those who are holy, sinless, without problems. He engages everyone in the world, even those possessed by Satan.

Compared to life in Biblical times, we have many modern advantages that help relieve suffering, pain and sickness. The medical progress and social welfare we experience are a direct result of Christian efforts to help the needy and to relieve suffering. The impetus was the mercy and care that Christianity advocated for the poor and needy. It was the Christians who established hospices and hospitals and famine relief and care for orphans and widows throughout the Roman Empire. That was the seed for the development of medical science and social concern for those in need. This was a real response to the evil they could see everywhere and which most people simply tried to avoid.

It is interesting that science fiction often portrays the earth being invaded by an alien army which attempts to destroy life on earth or tries to turn everyone into inhuman possessions of the aliens. Science fiction really is just borrowing the narrative of the Gospel. Science fiction turns Satan into an alien invader, but the story is the same. The world is at risk and we need to repel the invasion. The Scriptures tell us the alien invader is Satan and Christ came into the world to drive back this alien invasion and to overcome the spreading corruption of the Evil One. That is what Christ does in the Gospels, and whether we see it or not, it is what we are doing in the Church through the exorcism at Baptism and in our becoming the Body of Christ.

Throughout the Gospel Christ is present in the world seeking lost sheep, injured lambs, the sick and the possessed. Christ freely went even to places and people who had forsaken God. We attend the Liturgy to make Christ present in our lives, because we agree and believe that there is real evil in the world and we want it defeated. We unite ourselves to Christ to expel evil from our lives. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ to strengthen ourselves in the spiritual warfare so that we can go back into the world to defeat evil and witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We accept the risk of what spiritual warfare means – including martyrdom. Our task is not simply to come to the church to receive Christ and be united to Him. Our task is to go back into the world to get Christ out of the Church and into the entire world, to claim our lives for God and be God's servants daily so that evil is crushed because we are oriented to God. We don't need to orient ourselves toward evil to defeat it, we defeat evil by completing orienting our lives, our hearts and minds to God. If we keep our eyes and hearts on Christ, Satan and evil are automatically defeated.

The Liturgy in the Church orients our lives toward the Kingdom of God, it helps us always keep our face toward God. In the Liturgy we are always facing in one direction toward God, with our backs toward Satan because we have left evil behind us. That is the symbolism of the Liturgy and why we stand and orient ourselves this way in the Liturgy rather than sitting around in circle with the altar at our centre.

Our spiritual struggle is not just against our personal sins and passions, it is part of the cosmic warfare against Satan and all evil powers. This is why it is so difficult to overcome our personal sins and failings. Our struggle within ourselves immediately puts us into the conflict with Satan and his forces. When you desire to stop any sin or passion within yourself, lust, greed, anger, lying, etc, you are at once engaged in the spiritual warfare which is raging through the entire world. One difficulty in overcoming our sins, temptations and passions is we are not prepared to engage in the full spiritual warfare against Satan, and we fail to think of ourselves as part of the world or part of a greater whole. We tend to see our self as isolated and in a lonely struggle and that we just have personal problems, but the reality is we really are part of a bigger war. Christ came into the world to take on Himself the sin of the world, to directly confront and defeat Satan. But we have to keep ourselves united to Christ to benefit from His power. We keep ourselves united to Christ in the Communion of the Saints, in the Church, through confession, communion, prayer, the Liturgy, bible study, in practicing charity and forgiveness. We learn to love in and through community and that keeps us in the Body of Christ.

How do we keep Satan from influencing our lives? A willingness to listen to God's Word, listening to God's word, heartfelt prayer, a devout fear of God, true Christian love for God and for one another, a desire to serve God, humility, self-denial, seeking truth, doing God's will as revealed in the Gospel commandments.

Fr Ted Bobosh