



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 10 - 16 October 2021

SUNDAY 10 OCTOBER

3RD SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 7: 11-16

• 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.

SUNDAY 17 OCTOBER

GOSPEL READING: Luke 8: 5-15

EPISTLE READING: Titus 3: 8-15

Telephone Contact Numbers

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Fr Athanasios and
Fr Ephraim are available
at the Church every
Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm

Coincidental Wrong

Whatever's wrong with people is coincidental. Don't look down on anybody even if you see how immoral, prone to drink or blasphemous they are. The image of God is in them, somewhere, too, although, of course, they aren't aware of it.

It's natural for the enemy to come and besmirch that image. It's not easy to see the image of God in those who mock you and behave like brutes towards you. You should feel even more sorry for them because their souls have been distorted, to the extent that perhaps they're beyond correction, which will condemn them to eternal torment.

How difficult is this: Love your enemies!

» *Blessed Gabriel the New Confessor and Fool for Christ,
from Georgia*

Saints Eulampius and Eulampia - 10 October

Saints Eulampius and Eulampia were brother and sister. They lived at the beginning of the fourth century in the city of Nicomedia. Eulampius became upset after reading the decree of the emperor Maximian (284-305) sentencing all Christians to execution. Eulampius was horrified that the emperor was taking up arms against his own subjects rather than fighting the enemies of his country. The youth was brought to trial and commanded to renounce the Christian Faith. When he refused, they first raked him with iron hooks, and then placed him upon a red-hot bed of coals. All of a sudden the sufferer expressed a wish to visit the pagan temple. The judges were delighted, supposing that they had turned him from Christianity. In the pagan temple of Mars the saint approached the idol and cried out, "In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ I command you to fall to the floor and crumble into dust!" The idol immediately crashed down to the floor and was destroyed.

The people exclaimed, "The Supreme God is the Christian God, Who is great and mighty!" Saint Eulampius was again taken away for torture. This time his sister, Eulampia, appeared before the judges and declared that she also was a Christian. Eulampius told her, "Sister, do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul" (Mt.10:28).

The martyrs were tortured and thrown into a red-hot furnace, but the Lord protected them from the fire. Finally, they beheaded Eulampius, but Eulampia died from her torments before she could be beheaded.

Two hundred martyrs were converted to Christ after seeing the miracles of Saint Eulampius and Saint Eulampia as they were being tortured. They were also put to death and received the crown of martyrdom.

On Sharing Undeserved Mercy: Homily for the Third Sunday of Luke in the Orthodox Church

I have known people who have been troubled by the question of whether God is primarily characterized by human standards of love or justice. Some of them have worried that a God of love would simply overlook evil and hold no one accountable for their actions. Others have reacted against the view that God is primarily a harsh judge Who is out to get us and to make sure that we pay our pound of flesh for our sins.

Those with time to spare can have a debate about such abstract matters, as though God were a math problem that needed solving. But as Orthodox Christians, our focus must be different, for we humbly embrace God's truth not as a speculative idea, but in the Person of Jesus Christ. He is not a bundle of competing definitions according to the standards of our limited minds, but the Son of God Who became fully human in order to save us out of a divine compassion beyond our understanding. He lowered Himself, taking on the form of a servant to the point of death on the Cross, burial in a tomb, and descent into Hades in order to rise triumphantly over them in His glorious resurrection on the third day. And He did not do so for His own sake, but for ours. In Him,

we encounter not merely the best human aspirations, but truly the Lord Himself Who alone is Holy, Holy, Holy.

What does it look like when the Alpha and the Omega of the universe becomes one of us, living in our corrupt world of sin, death, and personal brokenness? In today's gospel text, we have a clear picture of what it means for the Word to become flesh and dwell among us. It means that He gives life to the dead and joy and comfort to those who mourn. Christ had compassion on the widow who had lost her only son. He consoled her, saying "Do not weep," and then touched the coffin, bringing the young man back from death itself.

The Lord's great act of mercy for this woman is a sign or enacted icon of our salvation. For we weep and mourn not only for loved ones whom we see no more, but also for how our own sins, and those of others, have broken, marred, and distorted the beauty of our world, of our souls, of our relationships, and of every dimension of our life. Death, destruction, hatred, fear, and decay in all their forms are the consequences of our refusal to live faithfully as those created in the image and likeness of God. We have worshipped ourselves, our possessions and our pride, and found only despair and emptiness as a result, as well as slavery to our own self-centred desires. So we weep with the widow of Nain both for losing loved ones and for losing ourselves.

The good news of the Gospel, however, is the unfathomable compassion of our Saviour. Rather than simply observing human suffering and letting us bear the consequences of our actions, the Father sent the Son to enter into our suffering, into our distorted and disintegrated world, in order to restore us to the blessedness for which He created us. He came to heal us, to stop us from weeping, and even to raise us from the dead into the glory of the heavenly kingdom. He came to unite us to Himself in holiness. The Son touched the coffin of the dead man and he arose. Christ's compassion for us is so profound that He also entered a coffin, a tomb, and even descended to Hades, the shadowy place of the dead because, out of love for humankind, He could not simply stand by and allow us to bear the full consequences of our actions.

No, our faith is not fundamentally about punishment or wrath for sinners. It is not focused on the bad news that we get what we deserve. Instead, we celebrate the good news of the infinite, holy mercy of Christ Who will stop at nothing to bring the one lost sheep back into the fold, Who is not embarrassed to welcome home the prodigal son, and Who will even submit to death on a cross in order to destroy it by rising in glory.

Of course, we have our part to play in responding to His great compassion. If we identify ourselves with Jesus Christ, if we are members of His Body, the Church, and are nourished by His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist, then His mercy must become evident in our lives. If we are partakers of the divine nature in Him, then His life must become ours such that, as St. Paul teaches, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Gal. 2:2) If we claim to receive Christ's compassion, then we must extend that same compassion to others, suffering with them in love, sharing their burdens as best we can, and going out of our way to show them the mercy that we have found in our Lord.

If we are to live the Christian life with integrity, we too must have the courage to relate to others with true compassion as they suffer, mourn, and live with pain and disorder of whatever kind. Perhaps they brought some of these conditions upon themselves. Like the rest of us, they have not always done the right thing and have suffered the consequences of their own bad choices. In some cases, they may actually believe that what they are doing is good. In other words, they are a lot like you and me. Instead of doing the easy and self-righteous thing by simply leaving them to their allegedly well-deserved misery, we must follow the way of our Lord, Who did not come to show mercy upon those who deserved it. Remember that mercy and grace, by definition, are not deserved. The widow of Nain and her dead son did not deserve the compassion of the Lord, but He showed love to them anyway. The relevance for our lives should be clear. If we have integrity as Christians, we will respond to others with the same compassion that we have experienced in Jesus Christ.

But we need to be clear: Extending Christ's compassion to others is not the same thing as being what our culture calls "a nice person" or making sure that everyone likes us or that we always tell people what they want to hear. It took discipline, strength, and courage for the Lord to show compassion throughout His entire earthly ministry, especially during His journey to the Cross. And every time that He healed the sick or raised the dead, He knew that the Pharisees and perhaps the Romans were watching, noticing Him as a threat to their power. He offended them virtually every step of the way with what He said and did. If we live and speak with holy compassion, we can be sure that some will take offense and think that we are crazy or even dangerous. To be His disciple is not a calling for cowards afraid of their own shadow or for people addicted to the praise of others, for it requires discipline, self-control, and a strength of character beyond our own power. It requires a willingness to be out of step with the dominant ways of the world, whatever they may be in a given time and place.

Unfortunately, it has become second nature to defend our egos by damning others, by building ourselves up as we put others down. Thank God, that is not way of our Lord. If it were, we would have no hope for salvation. If it were, the dead would be left in the tombs and the mourners would sorrow alone. But because the Saviour has come to us purely out of love for fallen, broken, sinful humanity, we must share His compassionate love with everyone we encounter, especially those whom we are inclined to ignore or condemn for whatever reason. For we do not relate to Jesus Christ as isolated individuals, but as members of His Body who share a common life. If we are members of His Body and receive His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, how can we disregard Him even in "the least of these" whose hearts and lives are broken, regardless of who is at fault for the circumstances?

Our Lord is a Person, not an abstract idea. Prepared by prayer, fasting, and confession, let us unite ourselves to Him in the Eucharist, receiving His compassionate mercy even as we extend the same holy concern to our neighbours, loved ones, and enemies. He came to call sinners to repentance, to heal the sick, and to raise the dead. He came to save, bless, and restore people as broken as you and me. If we receive Him, then we must receive them. For as hard as it is to believe, He works through us to extend His compassion to others. To be in Him is to become a living icon of His mercy, a personal sign of His salvation. - Fr Philip LeMasters