



## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program for 17 - 23 October 2021

#### SUNDAY 17 OCTOBER

#### SUNDAY OF THE 7TH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Luke 8: 5-15

- 8.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy

#### MONDAY 18 OCTOBER

*St Luke the Evangelist*

- 8.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy

#### WEDNESDAY 20 OCTOBER

*St Gerasimos of Cephalonia*

- 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 24 OCTOBER

**GOSPEL READING: Luke 8: 26-39**

**EPISTLE READING: 2 Corinthians 9: 6-11**

#### SUNDAY OF THE 7TH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

Today the Church remembers the 350 holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council under the holy Patriarch Tarasius (February 25). The Synod of 787, the second to meet at Nicea, refuted the Iconoclast heresy during the reign of Empress Irene and her son Constantine Porphyrogenitos. The Council decreed that the veneration of icons was not idolatry (Exodus 20:4-5), because the honour shown to them is not directed to the wood or paint, but passes to the prototype (the person depicted). It also upheld the possibility of depicting Christ, Who became man and took flesh at His Incarnation. The Father, on the other hand, cannot be represented in His eternal nature, because "no man has seen God at any time" (John 1:18).

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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.

### ST LUKE THE EVANGELIST : 18 October



On October 18th, our Church honours the distinguished figure of St. Luke the Evangelist. He was a Greek from the Great city of Antioch in Syria (today's Antakya). It was here that he studied medicine, in a city that was renowned for the development of science, philosophy and learning. The worldly glory of a medical practice did not attract him, and he was drawn to Christianity by the preaching of St. Paul. When the great Apostle, during his Second Apostolic Tour, departed from Troas to Macedonia, St. Luke was there and followed him. From then on he became a valuable companion to St. Paul. The Holy Apostle assigned him to various missions to establish the Christian faith in different countries, and St. Luke successfully did so. St. Luke preached the Holy Gospel in Italy, France, Libya, Egypt, Dalmatia, Achaia, and Viotia in Greece (where his tomb is located).

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He always wanted to be at St. Paul's side and minister to him as his doctor, helping the Apostle with his sensitive health and supporting him through difficult times. With this spirit of sacrifice, St. Luke was willing to accompany St. Paul when he was arrested by Roman soldiers in Palestine to be taken to Rome to be judged by Caesar.

St. Luke shared St. Paul's hardships, enduring the awful storm south of Crete, which resulted in the shipwreck near the island of Meliti (Malta). They abandoned ship and managed to reach land by floating on boards. During St. Paul's second imprisonment in Rome, St. Luke remained greatly devoted to the Holy Apostle. With gratitude, St. Paul wrote to St. Timothy: "Luke alone is with me" (2nd Timothy 4:11). While some of St. Paul's associates had abandoned him, St. Luke remained close to him until his conviction, and was a witness of the Apostle's martyrdom. Later, St. Luke devoted himself to missionary work until he was 84 years old. He also had a talent for painting. According to the Tradition, St. Luke met the Holy Mother of our Lord, and painted the first images of the Virgin. One of them is the Icon of the Virgin that is found in the Kykkos Monastery in Cyprus. A copy of this Icon is kept in Antalya.

We are grateful to St. Luke the Evangelist, because he alone collected information about the Holy Mother of God, the Apostles, and events in the life of Jesus that are not mentioned in the other three Gospels. Additionally, he recorded the work of the Holy Apostles in the spread of the Church to other nations far away. All of this is written in the Third Gospel that bears his name, and its sequel, "The Acts of the Apostles." He began his life as an idolater, but came to know the true God, Jesus Christ, Who is "The benefactor and the healer of all," and his life was transformed. He wanted to imitate Christ in his life, and giving up his career as a physician, devoted himself entirely to Christ and His word. At the same time, he used his skills as a doctor to help St. Paul. Who knows if the Holy Apostle would have survived all of the wounds inflicted upon him by the beatings, stones, and frequent illnesses! That is why St. Paul calls him: "Luke, the Beloved Physician" (Colossians 4:14).

My dear brothers and sisters, on the occasion of the Feast of the Evangelist Luke, let us express to him our gratitude for the Holy Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, which these holy books contain in the Bible. Let us all study them carefully to learn precisely the life, works, teachings of Christ and His Apostles, and the development of the Holy Church. And let's ask him:

*Luke, Apostle of Christ, author of faith dogma', supporter of the Church· You, who attracted the ones who had been immersed in darkness to the depths of the True God and you saved them from the storm...pray to the Saviour Christ and God, to offer us peace, a spiritual life, holy inspiration, enlightenment and His grace. Amen*  
- Metropolitan of Pisidia Sotirios



#### **4TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, SUNDAY OF THE 7TH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Luke 8: 5-15**

**Homily by St. John of Kronstadt on the Parable: Sower and the Seed -**

**On the Varying Effects of God's Word Upon Man's Heart, Owing to Differences Among Hearts**

Today, beloved, the Gospel parable was read about the sower and the seed, about the unequal quality of the land upon which the seed fell, and about the varying fates of the seed. At the end of the Gospel reading the Lord Himself, at the request of His disciples, explained the parable (Luke 8:5-15).

Pitiful man! Poor man! How many obstacles he has in this most important matter, that of saving his soul! In that he himself treads upon the saving seed of the word of God, which can make him wise unto salvation, treading upon it either intentionally, consciously, and sneeringly, or out of frivolity, neglect, and ignorance; in that the universal malefactor and blighter of the human race, the devil, snatches away the saving word; in that his hardened and obdurate heart does not permit him to be saved; in that thorns – or the various cares, passions, and pleasures of life, along with riches – set before him insurmountable barriers to salvation. Only a few, who with honest and goods hearts and true reason value their salvation as they should, patiently making use of the means for salvation that have been given us, are saved.

Many are called, but few are chosen. Astonishing! What is ultimately happening here? Who is to blame for this absurdity, for this voluntary perdition of men? Man himself is to blame, for treading upon – and often learning to tread upon daily – the wondrous, great, and countless gifts of God. The Lord God, Who created him in His image and likeness, in righteousness and holiness, granted him every opportunity, every means and strength, for life and piety. Man, in his laziness and ignorance, his negligence and obstinacy, his unreasonable predilection for the here and now, is like a shadow passing through life, rushing headlong towards perdition while pushing aside the saving hand of God. Who is to blame for this perdition, if not man himself? You will say: it is impossible, or at least difficult, to be saved! But, in fact, countless multitudes of men like you have been saved; they are even now being saved, though not many. "Being saved is difficult!" But do you really want to obtain eternal life – in blessed union with God, the Mother of God, the Angels, and all the Saints – without labour? Without the labour of self-purification, assisted by grace, without the labour of prayer and vigilance, without almsgiving, without meekness, without humility, without abstinence?

In the acquisition of earthly goods we do not judge labour to be superfluous, and we often work at this with all our strength; but when it comes to obtaining eternal blessedness, we throw up our hands. It is not as though the matter of salvation were extremely difficult: "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light," says the Saviour (Matthew 11:30). Yes, with God's help it gradually becomes easy, though at first it is hampered by the persistent warfare with sin. But is not sin itself a matter of extreme difficulty, since it is unnatural and alien to our divine nature? Is sin not torturous? If we labour in sin, how then can we not labour in righteousness, in saving our soul from sin? There, the end is death; but here, eternal life. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23).

The present parable of the sower and the seeds was given not only to encourage listeners with honest and good hearts to fulfil the word of God more zealously or unto greater perfection in virtue, but also so that people who are dissolute, neglectful, hard-

hearted, and filled with passions might be prompted to take heed, listen attentively to the word of God, and work out their salvation with fear. The grace of God can change any heart for the better, accomplishing the miracle of salvation in any man, if only he would believe, desire to be saved, seek salvation, and admit the abyss of his sins, as well as the abyss that his sins have created between wanton sinners and God; if only he would submit himself to God's saving grace and not push aside the saving hand of God. There were, and are, thousands of examples of men being saved who were previously dissolute, frivolous, hard-hearted, and subject to all manner of passion. They heeded the word of God, did not resist it, followed it – and they were saved, and are now in the blessedness of the Heavenly Kingdom. Nothing is impossible for God: He can save an inveterate sinner; He can raise him from the pit of hell to the height of His Kingdom and eternal blessedness – like the wise thief, like Mary of Egypt, who was drowning in the abyss of sin.

Man himself must simply desire, ask for, and earnestly seek salvation; for the Lord does not desire to draw us unto salvation forcibly, so that salvation, like something forced upon us, would not become repellent to him: for we hold dear and pleasing to us only that which we ourselves have come to love and to which we have grown akin, which has become our treasure and, as it were, our nature. And such precisely is Christian virtue, such is the Kingdom of God: one must come to know it, to love it with one's whole heart, to assimilate it here on earth, to root it in one's heart in such a way that it wholly penetrates one's entire soul, leaving no place in the heart for pernicious and insidious sin.

Christian! Cast aside your perilous dissipation, your unbelief, negligence, and sloth, your laziness for salvation; do not trample upon the wondrous gifts of grace; earnestly read or listen to the word of God, which opens unto you the path to salvation; accomplish it with the utmost understanding and strength; conquer your hard-heartedness and obduracy; soften your heart like wax with the flame of the grace of the Holy Spirit and with tears of repentance; cast from your heart the thorns of sin, even though this be grievous and painful, for they have become second nature to you. You cannot, you say; but God's grace is omnipotent: it will help you easily accomplish the whole work of your salvation.

Speaking of the seeds of the word of God that nourish the soul of man, I call to mind also that earthly, perishable seed: the seed of bread, the present bad harvest of bread crops, and the high cost of bread, its unprecedentedly high cost. The bad harvest came about from the destruction of wheat by insects and worms, or from drought. Where do these afflictions come from? From our sins. We did not offer the Lord God the fruits of our repentance and the correction of our wretched life; the Lord takes away our earthly goods, for which we did not know how to be, and were unwilling to be, thankful to Him; we did not want to do His will, and we became evil, crafty, proud, untruthful, unrestrained, idle-talking and foul-mouthed, avaricious, cruel, stingy, merciless, and unclean. Obviously, a rod of paternal justice hangs over us. God punishes us with crop failures, fires, floods, gruelling wars, and destructive hardships and diseases. But do we come to our senses, do we repent, do we correct ourselves? Have we not become obdurate, have not our hearts turned wholly to stone? Deliver us, O God! Where then will the Kingdom of God be on earth, if not in Christians that call themselves Orthodox, in an Orthodox land, where there are so many precious Orthodox shrines dedicated to God, so many holy relics of God-pleasers, so many wonder-working icons, so many magnificent churches, in which there are such heavenly services on earth? "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43). Yes, may we not forever be put to shame; may the Lord correct us with the rod of punishment, and may He not deprive us of His mercy and His Kingdom. Amen.

- *Translation Copyright Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA.*

#### **SAINT GERASIMOS OF CEPHALONIA : 20 October**

Saint Gerasimos was from the Peloponnesus, the son of Demetrius and Kale, of the family of Notaras. He was reared in piety by them and studied the Sacred writings. He left his country and went throughout various lands, and finally came to Cephalonia, where he restored a certain old church and built a convent around it, where it stands to this day at the place called Omala. He finished the course of his life there in asceticism in the year 1570. His sacred relics, which remain incorrupt, are kept there for the sanctification of the faithful.

They distill a heavenly fragrance and work many miracles and are for the sanctification and veneration by the faithful. He has become the Patron of the island of Cephalonia and the protector of all its inhabitants and works as a powerful intercessor before God.

#### **The Epidemic of Cholera in 1760**

In 1760, when an epidemic of cholera struck the island, a nun named Akakia had a vision of the saint, praying in front of an icon of the Mother of God, beseeching her to halt the epidemic. The Mother of God spoke from the icon and said, "I have asked my Son, and He will grant you this." Then the saint caught hold of a roll of a cotton-like material wrapped around his staff, and began plucking off many small pieces, scattering them into the air. That night he also appeared to another woman on the island, telling her to go quickly to her father's house - that the infection would not spread to the countryside.

The stories of these visions quickly made the rounds of the villages. One local woman, however, refused to believe the accounts, and scoffed at them saying, "These are stories for children." That night the saint appeared to her in a dream and struck her with his staff, saying, "By this children's story, through the blessing of Panagia, I dispel the sickness from this island." The next morning the woman went straight to the monastery to venerate the saint's relics, telling the nuns of her dream and showing them the bruise on her side where the saint had struck her. They all gave thanks to God.