



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 14—20 November 2021

SUNDAY 14 NOVEMBER

8TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 10: 25-37

- 7.00—9.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 10.00-11.30am—Divine Liturgy

TUESDAY 16 NOVEMBER

*St Matthew the Apostle
and Evangelist*

- 7.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 7.00pm—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 21 NOVEMBER

GOSPEL READING: Luke 10: 38-42, 11: 27-28

EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 9: 1-7

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
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart and inward parts. Hence, if we feel in our hearts the cold which comes from the devil - for the devil is cold - let us call on the Lord. He will come to warm our hearts with perfect love, not only for Him but also for our neighbour, and the cold of him who hates the good will flee before the heat of His countenance.

- St. Seraphim of Sarov

November 15: The Nativity Fast Begins

As of tomorrow, all Christians are called upon to begin the great fast for the Great Feast of our Lord's Nativity. We are reminded why this fast was set by the Holy Fathers.

In the Old Testament, Moses fasted for forty days in the desert of Egypt with no food and no water in order to receive the Law, the Ten Commandments, we on the other hand, fast for forty days, not like Moses who did so without food and drink at all, but just abstaining from certain food on certain days, and this; not simply to receive the Law like Moses, but the Lawgiver Himself; Christ our Almighty God, so fasting is the very least we can do. Fasting should also be combined with other things such as prayer, repentance & confession, receiving the Holy Gifts, helping people in need, and feeding poor people.

Let us all with God's help, try to start fasting as of today and we will begin to see how much it will affect our lives, but to do so we must try to believe in what we are doing, we must ask God to help us believe, we must ask for His help and great mercy so that our hearts may become the same cave which our Lord Jesus Christ will be born in. May Christ Bless you all and may he forgive us. Amen.



To be Healed by the Good Samaritan: Homily for the 8th Sunday of Luke in the Orthodox Church

It is tempting to use religion to help us feel better about ourselves. Too often, we want to make God in our own image and let ourselves off the hook from anything that challenges us to do something different from what we want to do. It can be very appealing to try to use God for purposes other than the healing of our souls.

That is the attitude that Jesus Christ rejected in today's gospel reading. After describing how the Old Testament law required loving God "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself," the lawyer wanted to justify himself by narrowing down the types of people he had to love. That is why he asked "And who is my neighbour?" He wanted to limit what God required of him. That way, he could assume that he was a righteous man.

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The Lord's parable does not, however, place any limits on what it means to love our neighbour. He tells us about a man who was robbed, severely beaten, and then left on the side of the road to die. Obviously, anyone who saw him in that condition would have an obligation to help him. All the more is that the case for the religious leaders who were going down that same road. They surely knew that the Old Testament law required them to care for a fellow Jew in a life-threatening situation. Like the lawyer, however, they must have come up with some excuse not to treat him as a neighbour. We do not know exactly what they were thinking, but they somehow justified passing by on the other side without helping him at all.

Ironically, a Samaritan is the one who treated the unfortunate man as a neighbour. The Samaritan did not limit his concern to his own people. He did not restrict the demands of love in any way. Even though he knew that the Jews despised and had nothing to do with Samaritans, he responded with boundless compassion to the fellow's plight. He was not calculating how little he could do and still think of himself a decent person. No, he spontaneously sacrificed his time, energy, and resources to bring a man who was a stranger and a foreigner back to health. Even the lawyer got the point of the story, for he saw that the one who treated the man as a neighbour was "The one who showed mercy to him."

The Lord used the story of the Good Samaritan to teach us about what it means to share in His life. Purely out of compassionate, boundless love, Christ came to heal us from the self-imposed pain and misery that our sins have worked on our souls. He came to conquer our slavery to the fear of death, which is the wages of sin. Like the Samaritan, He was despised and rejected. In the parable, the religious leaders were of no help to the man who was robbed, beaten, and left to die. They passed by and left him in the condition in which they found him. Likewise, the legalistic, hypocritical religious leaders who rejected the Messiah were of no spiritual benefit to those who needed healing from the ravages of sin. Laws can be interpreted and applied however someone sees fit, but they lack the power to heal anyone, much less to raise the dead. At their best, they tell us what to do, but still lack the power to enable us to obey them.

Christ has brought salvation to the world, not by merely giving us a code of conduct, but by making us participants in His divine life by grace. By becoming fully human even as He remains fully divine, He has restored and fulfilled the basic human vocation to become like God in holiness. Only the God-Man could do that. If we are truly in communion with Him, then His boundless love must become characteristic of our lives. Among other things, that means gaining the strength to love our neighbours as ourselves by showing them mercy. Doing that even for those we love most in life is often difficult because our self-centeredness makes it hard to give anyone the same consideration we give ourselves. When it comes to particular people we do not like or to members of groups we perceive as threats or enemies, learning to love them as the Saviour has loved us may seem impossibly hard.

Here it is helpful to remember what the Samaritan in the parable did for the robbed and beaten man. He administered first aid, took him to an inn, paid the innkeeper to care for him, and promised to pay for any additional expenses when he returned. Christ does the same for us in baptism, the Eucharist, and the full sacramental life of the Church, which is a hospital for our recovery from the ravages of sin. Through the Church, He also calls us to spiritual disciplines that help us gain the strength to convey His mercy to our neighbours by loving them as we love ourselves.

In order to be able to do that, we must seek healing and strength for a life in communion with Christ through the ministries of His Body, the Church. People who are recovering from severe injuries must cooperate with their physicians and therapists in order to become well. They must take their medicine and dedicate themselves to exercises, stretches, and other disciplines in order to regain health and function. We must approach the Christian life in a similar way in order to grow in our ability to manifest the Saviour's compassionate love to our neighbours.

This is not an optional calling only for those who want to become especially holy. No, it is a basic dimension of the Christian life. However we treat "the least of these," the most miserable and difficult people we encounter, is how we treat our Lord. St. John the Theologian taught, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, Whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20)

It is, of course, much easier to view the Church as simply a social club, a place of beauty, or where we go to feel better about ourselves. To think that way, however, makes us like the lawyer who tried to limit the requirement of loving his neighbours in order to justify himself. If we limit the significance of the Church to serving our desires, then we are trying to use God to get what we want. To do so is to fall into a dangerous form of self-centeredness that is blind to the true meaning of the Saviour's compassion. He makes us members of His Body in order to share His life with us, in order to perfect us in love in His image and likeness. He has come to heal us, but we must cooperate with His therapy if we are to grow in spiritual strength.

For example, we do not receive the Eucharist in order to fulfil a legal obligation, but for "the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting." If we receive Communion, we must live in communion with Christ by conveying His compassionate love to our suffering neighbours. We do not take Confession for legalistic reasons, but to be healed from the damage our sins have done to our souls. All the holy mysteries of the Church strengthen us for a life of ever-greater union with Christ, which will bear fruit in how we treat the people we encounter every day. Even as He offered Himself fully on the Cross for our salvation, there is no limit to the offering that He calls us to make of our lives for the sake of others. Those who have received His mercy will extend that same mercy to their neighbours, no matter who they are. The Lord's words at the end of the gospel reading apply directly to us: "Go and do likewise."

- Fr Philip LeMasters