



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 12—18 December 2021

SUNDAY 12 DECEMBER
St Spyridon Wonderworker of
Trimythous

11th SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 14: 16-24
• **7.00am**— Orthros and Divine Liturgy
• **10.00am**— Divine Liturgy

WEDNESDAY 15 DECEMBER
St Eleutherios and his Mother
St Anthia

• **7.30am**— Orthros and Divine Liturgy

FRIDAY 17 DECEMBER
St Dionysios of Zakynthos
Prophet Daniel and the Three Youths

• **7.30am**— Orthros and Divine Liturgy

2021 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)

Sadly, due to COVID restrictions, Sunday School Classes were unable to continue.

We pray they will resume again early in the new year, 2022.

SUNDAY 19 DECEMBER

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 1: 1-25

EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 11: 9-10, 32-40

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.

St Dionysios of Zakynthos

Apolytikion: The offspring of Zakynthos and president of Aegina, and the protector of the Monastery of Strophades, let all us the faithful honour with one accord Dionysios. And let us cry unto him sincerely: By your Prayers save those who celebrate your Memory and cry unto you: Glory to Christ Who has Glorified you; Glory to Him Who has made you Wondrous; Glory to Him Who has granted you unto us as an unsleeping intercessor.

Saint Spyridon, The Wonderworker

Saint Spyridon lived during the time of King Constantine the Great and his son Constantius.

This God-bearing Father of the Church, the great defender of Corfu and the boast of all the Orthodox, had Cyprus as his homeland. He was simple in manner and humble of heart, and was a shepherd of sheep. When he was joined to a wife, he begat of her a daughter whom they named Irene. After his wife's departure from this life, he was appointed Bishop of Trimythos, and thus he became also a shepherd of rational sheep. When the First Ecumenical Council was assembled in Nicaea, he also was present, and by means of his most simple words stopped the mouths of the Arians who were wise in their own conceit. By the divine grace which dwelt in him, he wrought such great wonders that he received the surname 'Wonderworker.' So it is that, having tended his flock piously and in a manner pleasing to God, he reposed in the Lord about the year 350, leaving to his country his sacred relics as a consolation and source of healing for the faithful.

About the middle of the seventh century, because of the incursions made by the barbarians at that time, his sacred relics were taken to Constantinople, where they remained, being honoured by the emperors themselves. But before the fall of Constantinople, which took place on May 29, 1453, a certain priest named George Kalokhairetes, the parish priest of the church where the Saint's sacred relics, as well as those of Saint Theodora the Empress, were kept, took them away on account of the impending peril. Travelling by way of Serbia, he came as far as Arta in Epirus, a region in Western Greece opposite to the isle of Corfu. From there, while the misfortunes of the Christian people were increasing with every day, he passed over to Corfu about the year 1460. The relics of Saint Theodora were given to the people of Corfu; but those of Saint Spyridon remain to this day, according to the rights of inheritance, the most precious treasure of the priest's own descendants, and they continue to be a staff for the faithful in Orthodoxy, and a supernatural wonder for those that behold him; for even after the passage of 1,500 years, they have remained incorrupt, and even the flexibility of his flesh has been preserved. Truly wondrous is God in His Saints! (Ps. 67:3 5)

Apolytikion

O Father, God-bearer, Spyridon, you were proven a champion and Wonder Worker of the First Ecumenical Council. You spoke to the girl in the grave and turned the serpent to gold. And, when chanting your prayers, most sacred One, angels ministered with you. Glory to Him who glorified you; glory to Him who crowned you; glory to Him who, through you, works healing for all.

11th SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 14: 16-24

Metropolitan of Pisidia Sotirios

The parable of the Great Banquet, which we heard today in the Holy Gospel, was told by Jesus at the house of a Pharisee lord during a dinner in which he had been invited with others. He took the opportunity to teach this parable from the words of one of those who ate with Him: "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15). The Lord compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a great feast or banquet in which everyone wants to take part. Here they can enjoy the goods that the affectionate Father God has prepared. So he sends his servant to call the most distinguished and important people. But each refused to attend and made excuses. The first said to him: "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go see it." A silly excuse! He didn't look at the land before he bought it? The second one said: I bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them." Could this not have been done later? And the third said: "I have married a wife and therefore cannot come." He was called on a joyous occasion, and he had a chance to bring his wife with him!

All of them have a common feature: They did not appreciate the honour that was offered to them by the host, who had prepared such a great feast.

This is just what happened to the Lord when he called the Israelites. Here was the Son of God, who came as a man to the earth and invited them to believe in Him and to enter into His heavenly Kingdom! They were the first, but they said no. It is the same with different people whom God calls to enjoy the blessings He offers through His holy Church. For various reasons, they refuse.

In addition to His Kingdom in Heaven, the Lord invites Christians to another great Supper that is prepared here on earth. It is the Last Supper, the first time Jesus spoke to His disciples that Great Thursday night, shortly before being arrested and led to Calvary. This Lasting Supper continues to be offered today, as it has over the centuries, so that all Christians for all time can participate in it. We understand: It is the Holy Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, which takes place during the Divine Liturgy every Sunday and feast day.

At this meal, the Lord proclaims Himself as food to all His believers: "take, eat; this is My body." And "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood...for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:26-28). With this divine nourishment, the soul and body are cleansed from all sins. The Holy Gifts unite Christians with Christ and their participation in the heavenly Kingdom is ensured. This is exactly what is emphasized in the prayer of the Divine Liturgy (reading before the Lord's Prayer): "Lord,...make us worthy to partake of Your heavenly and awesome Mysteries from this holy and spiritual Table with a clear conscience; for the remission of sins, forgiveness of transgressions, communion of the Holy Spirit, inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven...."

There is no greater reality in human life than our participation in the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, and no greater blessing and joy than when we live with Holy Communion. That is why the believer, who understands the benefit they receive with their union with Christ, leaves every other work behind on Sunday, and rushes to go to Church. It is here that they meet the Lord Jesus Christ, who is waiting to unite with them and offer His great blessings.

United with Christ here on earth, we will be worthy to hear in His Second Coming: "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Amen.



St. John of Kronstadt, Sermon on the Nativity of Jesus Christ

"What, then, O brethren, is required of us in order that we might avail ourselves of all the grace brought unto us from on high by the coming to earth of the Son of God? What is necessary, first of all, is faith in the Son of God, in the Gospel as the salvation-bestowing heavenly teaching; a true repentance of sins and the correction of life and of heart; communion in prayer and in the mysteries [sacraments]; the knowledge and fulfillment of Christ's commandments. Also necessary are the virtues: Christian humility, alms-giving, continence, purity and chastity, simplicity and goodness of heart.

Let us, then, O brothers and sisters, bring these virtues as a gift to the One Who was born for the sake of our salvation – let us bring them in place of the gold, frankincense and myrrh which the Magi brought Him, as to One Who is King, God, and Man, come to die for us. This, from us, shall be the most-pleasing form of sacrifice to God and to the Infant Jesus Christ."