



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 13—19 March 2022

SUNDAY 13 MARCH

Sunday of Orthodoxy—John 1: 43-51

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 6.30pm Vespers of Forgiveness
St Nicholas, Yarraville

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 14 MARCH

- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline

TUESDAY 15 MARCH

- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline

WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH

- 8.00am
Service of Pre-sanctified Liturgy
- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline

THURSDAY 17 MARCH

- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline



- 8.00—9.00pm

TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP

ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME

Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment.

* In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church

FRIDAY 18 MARCH

- 6.00pm
Service of Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos
— Second Salutations to the Theotokos

SUNDAY 20 MARCH

GOSPEL READING: Mark: 2: 1-12
EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 1: 10-14—2: 1-3

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.

Fasting returns us to an awareness of our needs, and helps us discern the difference between what we truly need and the vast, unlimited range of what we want.

Sunday of Orthodoxy—John 1: 43-51

What Great Lent is All About: Becoming a Living Icon of God's Love for Humankind

During this season of Great Lent, much changes in the services of the Church and much should change in our lives also. We may be tempted to think that the point of these weeks is found simply in the liturgies themselves: different colors, longer prayers, and more services. For example, we serve the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on Sundays in Lent with its longer *anaphora* or Eucharistic prayer. We also carry icons in a procession at the end of Liturgy today to celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy, which commemorates the restoration of icons after the period of iconoclasm many centuries ago. But instead of thinking that we have started Lent well simply by participating in these services, you and I must also become what we celebrate, what we enact in them. Otherwise, we will miss entirely the point not only of the services, but of Lent itself.

In St. Basil's lengthy Eucharistic prayer, there is great stress on God's *philanthropia* or love for human beings manifested in the kenotic or self-emptying love of Jesus Christ in His incarnation, death, and resurrection in order to bring broken, fallen humanity into the eternal life of the Holy Trinity. The prayer also asks the Father to pour out mercy upon everyone who suffers from the ill effects of the brokenness of life in the world as know it, such as the sick, the poor, prisoners and captives, as well as all who endure physical and spiritual difficulties not befitting those who bear the image and likeness of God. St. Basil's petitions remind us that, if we want the Father's mercy for the healing of our brokenness and even dare to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ as unworthy prodigal sons and daughters, we must then live as those who

are truly in communion with the Lord. In other words, the philanthropic, self-emptying love of God that we claim for ourselves must become evident and active in us, especially in how we treat those all around us who suffer in any way and who are in need of help and friendship. In other words, we who boldly pray these prayers we must become living icons of the very divine love and blessing that we want for ourselves. That is ultimately the goal of this Lenten season.

As beautiful as the icons that adorn our Church are, they are not fundamentally works of art that could just as easily be in a museum or gallery. They are actually windows to heaven which remind us that the Son of God really has become one of us, with a visible human body, and that we are called to become like the saints whose images are portrayed in them. For we are all icons of God, created in His image and likeness. Jesus Christ is the new Adam Who has restored and healed every dimension of our fallen humanity, and brought us, as distinct persons, into the very life of the Holy Trinity.

When we carry icons in the procession at the end of Liturgy today, we call ourselves to become better living icons of the Lord. The word "icon" means image, and we are all created in the image of God with the calling to grow constantly to become more like Him. Contrary to popular opinion, religion is not fundamentally about morality, politics, family stability, social order, or psychological adjustment. It is about participating personally in the life of God, about becoming holy in a way that overturns all the categories and assumptions of the world as we know it. The Lord's promise to Nathanael, "you shall see the heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man," is for all who share personally in the deification of humanity that Jesus Christ has brought to the world. That is ultimately the goal of this Lenten season.

The good news we celebrate today is that, in our Lord, we are no longer shut out of paradise. Now is the time to start living in a way that bears witness to the great salvation that He has brought to the world. Now is the time, through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and forgiveness, to become living icons of a self-emptying mercy that is beyond anything that our fallen world can understand. Now is the time to display in our own lives the same divine mercy that we ask for ourselves.

As we pray St. Basil's Eucharistic prayer on the next several Sundays, and as we process with our icons today, let us all do so with genuine gratitude for the love of Jesus Christ for sick, weak, and corrupt sinners like you and me. And then let us go out into the world and shine forth with that same love in tangible, practical ways that bless our neighbors, even our enemies, and manifest the holy and eternal life that our Savior has brought to the world. Yes, my brothers and sisters, that is ultimately the goal of this Lenten season.

Fr. Philip LeMasters



DO WE SOMETIMES RELY TOO MUCH ON OURSELVES? CAN THIS LEAD US TO EXCESSIVE GRIEF?

According to St. Nicodemus the Athonite there are different types of grief or sorrow one may feel after falling into some transgression. Grief can be motivated by self-esteem or by a genuine remorse and willingness to repent. Which of the two do we experience?

A sorrow that is godly and heartfelt will produce repentance which cleanses us from sin and our alienation from God. While the sorrow of the world one that is self-centred, and more troubled by the embarrassment and the predicament we find ourselves in, stops short of repentance and reconciliation to God.

Apostle Paul says "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Cor. 7:10)

St. Nicodemus tells us:

It is wrong to regard as a virtue the excessive grief, which one feels after committing a sin, not realising that it is caused by pride and a high opinion of themselves, based on the fact that they rely too much on themselves and their own powers. For by thinking they are something important they undertake too much, hoping to deal with it by themselves.

When the experience of their downfall shows them how weak they are, they are astounded, like people, who meet with something unexpected, and they are cast into turmoil and grow faint-hearted. For they see, fallen and prone on the ground, that graven image which is themselves, upon which they put all their hopes and expectations.

Alternatively, if one does not rely on himself but puts his trust in God, when they fall they are not greatly surprised and are not overcome with excessive grief, for they know that it is as a result of their own impotence, and above all, of the weakness of their trust in God. So their downfall increases their distrust of himself and makes them try all the harder to increase and deepen their humble trust in God.

Therefore St. Nicodemus advises us in order to avoid being overcome with excessive grief caused by pride after having a downfall, we should have as our desire the need to wash away as quickly as possible the filth of sin which has offended God, and acquire new strength to fight against our old self through the most holy sacrament of repentance and confession.

However sometimes we go to confession with the wrong motivation. As St. Nicodemus says, some go to confession not to express their humble repentance, but go to their spiritual father "exhausted by their grief and anguish, which they suffer for no other reason but self-esteem, in order to be freed of their excessive grief rather than the sin which causes it". Only humble, whole-hearted repentance will grant relief. Otherwise our grief will continue to be excessive!