



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 20—26 March 2022

SUNDAY 20 MARCH

2nd Sunday of Lent, St Gregory Palamas, Mark 2: 1-12

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 6.30pm Vespers of Forgiveness at Parish of St Andrew, Sunshine

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 21 MARCH

- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline

TUESDAY 22 MARCH

- 5.30pm
Service of Great Compline

WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH

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

THURSDAY 24 MARCH

- 5.30pm
Service of Vespers for Annunciation of the Theotokos
- ➔ • 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 25 MARCH The Annunciation of the Theotokos

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 6.30pm
Service of Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos
— Third Salutations to the Theotokos

SUNDAY 27 MARCH

GOSPEL READING: Mark 8: 34-38, 9:1
EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 4: 14-16, 5: 1-6

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.

Chase away the bad
thoughts and fantasies
that the devil presents.
Don't even notice
them."
*Saint Iakovos Tsalikis
of Evia*

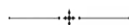
The Annunciation of the Theotokos

Panagia - is the person through whom the Logos became flesh. The person who accepted the awesome news and responsibility that she had been chosen to bear and give birth to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

She is our inspiration and help. Gazing at her it is easy to believe in the heavenly beauty of the world and in man's heavenly transcendent calling.

St Gregory Palamas

..we are not without hope of salvation, nor is it at all the right time for us to despair. All our life is a season of repentance, for God 'desires not the death of the sinner', as it is written, 'but that the wicked turn from his way and live' (cf. Ez. 33:11 LXX). For, if there were no hope of turning back, why would death not have followed immediately on disobedience, and why would we not be deprived of life as soon as we sin? For where there is hope of turning back, there is no room for despair.



St. Gregory Palamas (fourteenth century), whose feast is celebrated on the Second Sunday of Lent, taught that the "something more" is life with God. As a young scholar, monk, and later Archbishop of Thessalonike, he was an inspiring example to his contemporaries. The central teaching of St. Gregory was that through faith, prayer, and the sacraments of the church, Christians experience a personal sharing in the life of God. The life and work of St. Gregory can be summed up by two key words in the Orthodox Christian tradition: "theosis" (divinization or becoming like God) and "hesychasm" (quietude or prayerful stillness before God).

Becoming Like Christ by Obeying His Commandments: Homily for the Second Sunday of Great Lent and Commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, in the Orthodox Church

It is no surprise that many people today do not identify with any particular religion. They can have friends, get help from counsellors, follow a moral code, and become respected members of society without membership in any faith community. If people lose interest in Christianity for those reasons, however, they have missed the point. For Christ did not offer Himself on the Cross and rise from the dead in order to make us well-adjusted citizens of this world, but to heal every dimension of our brokenness so that we will shine brilliantly with His divine glory.

In today's gospel reading, the Savior did what not even the best religious practices could do: As a sign of His authority to forgive sins, He enabled a paralysed man to stand up, carry his bed, and walk home. Christ enabled him to participate personally in His fulfilment of the human person in the divine image and likeness. He not only healed the corruption of the man's soul, but also healed his body as a visible sign that His salvation restores us as whole persons.

On this second Sunday of Great Lent, we commemorate St. Gregory Palamas, who defended the experience of monks who, in the stillness of prayer from their hearts, saw the Uncreated Light of God. The eyes of their souls were cleansed and illumined such that they beheld the Divine Glory as the Apostles did at the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor. St. Gregory taught that to know God is to participate in His gracious divine energies as we are transformed in holiness in every aspect of our existence. He proclaimed that our calling is nothing less than to know and experience God, not as an abstract idea or concept, but through union with Him that sanctifies every dimension of the human person. This kind of spiritual experience is beyond rational definition, as it is truly an encounter with the great "I AM" of the Burning Bush. (Ex. 3:14)

Palamas' teaching helps us understand how we receive Christ's healing of the paralysis of our souls as we share in His life as "partakers of the divine nature" by grace. The Lord offers not merely a set of beliefs, but Himself as the God-Man Who restores us fully in the divine image and likeness. Moses' face was radiant after he encountered God on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 34:29) and flames of fire appeared upon the heads of the Apostles at Pentecost. (Acts 2:3) The faces of many Saints throughout the history of the Church have also beamed with holy light. Those who have clear spiritual vision behold His glory shining brightly to this very day, even as they themselves are radiant in God.

In order to gain a measure of that kind of clarity, we must open ourselves to Christ's healing in practical, tangible ways by obeying His commandments. The formerly paralysed man had to obey the instruction "rise, take up your pallet and go home" in order to accept the Lord's healing. Likewise, we must obey the Saviour's commands, for they are therapeutic for healing our passions by helping us conform our character to that of the New Adam. Becoming like Him is what it means to be transfigured as living icons who shine radiantly with holy glory.

Christ taught that the greatest of the commandments is to love "God with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself." (Mk. 12: 30) We pray, fast, give, forgive, and confess and repent of our sins in obedience to these commandments. That is how we open our souls more fully to receive the gracious divine energies of our Lord. No matter how busy or difficult our daily lives may be, we must all embrace these Lenten disciplines in ways that will help us overcome the paralysis of our souls. If we put them off until a future time when we imagine that all will be well and we will feel especially pious, we will never get around to them. We make ourselves weaker every day that we disregard obedience, for that amounts to refusing to accept the healing of the Savior. It is refusing to "rise, take up your pallet and go home."

In contrast, whenever we obey the Lord as best we can this Lent, we open ourselves to the brilliant healing light of Christ and become at least a bit more like Him. Whenever we are fully present to the Lord in prayer, we grow in union with Him. Whenever we struggle to reorient our desires for self-centred pleasure for fulfilment in God, we participate more fully in the divine life. Whenever we serve our neighbours, we actually minister to the Savior and become more like Him. In all these ways, we truly encounter God and share in His life. This is not a calling reserved for the spiritual elite, but for each and every one of us who remains weak before our passions and whose spiritual vision is darkened by sin. We must respond to our common calling with faith that, if we persist in obeying Christ's commands, He will transfigure us by grace in ways that go well beyond conventional religiosity. Then our lives will bear such brilliant witness to the Lord's healing that others will be amazed and glorify "God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'"

-Fr. Philip LeMasters