



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 22—28 May 2022

CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN!

SUNDAY 22 MAY

SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN, John 4: 5-42

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

2022 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 23 MAY

- 10.00am
Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall

WEDNESDAY 24 MAY

- 7.00pm
Divine Liturgy (English)

THURSDAY 26 MAY

- 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 27 MAY

St John the Russian

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 29 MAY

GOSPEL READING: John 9: 1- 38
EPISTLE READING: Acts 16: 16-34

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.

A monk complained to St Arsenius that, while reading the Holy Scriptures, he felt neither the power of the words he read nor any sweetness in his heart. To this the great saint replied:

My child, just read! I have heard that snake-charmers, when they cast a spell on the snakes, pronounce words that they themselves do not understand; but the snakes, hearing the words spoken, feel their power and are tamed.

So with us, when we constantly keep the words of Holy Scripture on our lips; even if we cannot feel their power, the evil spirits, hearing these words, flee in terror, for they cannot abide the word of the Holy Spirit. My child, just read. The Holy Spirit, who wrote the divine words through those He inspired, will hear and understand, and will hasten to your aid; and the demons will hear and understand, and will flee from you. That is: He whom you summon to your aid will understand, and he whom you want to drive from you will understand, and both goals will be reached.'

You see very clearly that it is extremely difficult, and without God's grace and your own fervent prayer and abstinence, impossible, for you to change for the better. You feel within yourself the action of a multitude of passions: of pride, malice, envy, greediness, the love of money, despondency, slothfulness, fornication, impatience, and disobedience; and yet you remain in them, are often bound by them, whilst the long-suffering Lord bears with you, awaiting your return and amendment; and still bestows upon you all the gifts of His mercy.

Be then indulgent, patient, and loving to those who live with you, and who also suffer from many passions; conquer every evil by good, and, above all, pray to God for them, that He may correct them—that He may turn their hearts to Himself, the source of holiness.

Do not help the Devil to spread his kingdom. Hallow the name of your Heavenly Father by your actions; help Him to spread His Kingdom on earth. 'For we are labourers together with God.'

Be zealous of the fulfilment of His will on earth, as it is in heaven. Forgive them that trespass against you with joy, as a good son rejoices when he has a chance of fulfilling the will of his beloved father.

+ St. John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*

SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN, John 4: 5-42

Today's Gospel reading begins: "Jesus came into a city of Samaria".

Samaria had originally been a Jewish region, but the Old Testament tells us that, on account of their lack of faith, God allowed the king of Assyria, Shalmaneser, to attack Samaria and deport its inhabitants to Assyria. He then brought Assyrians from Babylon and other places and settled them in Samaria in order to replace the Jewish population. Initially, these new settlers were pagans, but they eventually accepted the worship of the one God and the Law of Moses. By the time of Jesus, the Samaritans claimed to be the true Jews, the true descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, they rejected all of the other Old Testament prophets, and also disagreed with the Jews on the true location of the Temple, choosing to worship at a different mountain.

So, in the eyes of the Jews, the Samaritans were seen not just as Gentiles, but as usurpers of Jewish land, usurpers of Jewish identity and history, co-conspirators with the enemies of God's people. They were not just ignorant of the Truth, but perverters of the Truth. This is why Jews had such animosity toward the Samaritans, and why they would normally have no dealings with them. And so the opening phrase, "Jesus came into a city of Samaria" describes a bold and unexpected act.

Just as the Lord came down from heaven, to save the fallen race of man on earth, our Lord leaving the land of the Jews and going into the land of Samaria shows God's desire to reach out to those who have gone astray and bring them back to himself. At midday, the sixth hour, the hottest part of the day, when most people would avoid any heavy work, a Samaritan woman comes to the well to draw water, and Jesus says to her, "Give me to drink". The Bible doesn't give us a reason, but from the story we learn that this woman was previously five times married, and was now living with a man outside marriage, and so perhaps the reason she was forced to come to the well at such an odd time of day was because she was something of an out-cast in that city; she was considered a sinner, and she wanted to avoid other people.

The Lord not only does not walk away from her, shun her or ignore her, but he engages this sinful woman from an unclean people in conversation, and he asks her, "Give me to drink".

As we pray every morning during the six psalms of Matins:

O God, my God, unto Thee I rise early at dawn. My soul hath thirsted for Thee.

Ο Θεός ὁ Θεός μου, προς σε ὀρθρίζω, ἐδίψησέ σε ἡ ψυχὴ μου.

Just as the human soul has a natural thirst for God on account of it being created in the image of God, the Lord in His infinite love for mankind also longs for the return of the prodigal son and the lost sheep, He thirsts for the person who has gone astray. This is why he says to the Samaritan woman, "Give me to drink". In other words, it is as if he is saying to her, "come back to me, I long for your return."

And these words of the Lord are addressed to each and every human being. Every moment of our life, even the most mundane everyday tasks like fetching water, can become a life-changing encounter with the Lord. As He says elsewhere in Scripture, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). The Lord is constantly seeking us, constantly knocking at the door to our heart, ready to give us His grace, and to quench our thirst with the living water of the Holy Spirit. The only thing He needs from us is a good disposition, a willingness to open the door. And this is what He finds in the Samaritan woman.

When the Lord says, "Whosoever drinks the water I shall give him in no wise shall ever thirst", she might not understand what he means, but she responds positively: "Lord, give me this water."

When the Lord says, "Go, call your husband, and come here", she responds with honesty: "I have no husband."

When the Lord with great gentleness reveals to her that he is aware of her sin, she does not become defensive, but she responds with humility, and by that humility she begins to perceive who it is she is speaking to: "Lord, I perceive that you are a prophet".

At each exchange, the woman becomes more and more open and receptive, allowing Christ to reveal to her higher and higher truths, until she finally understands that the person standing in front of her is the Messiah.

At the end of the conversation, the Gospel says "the woman left her water pot" and went into the city to tell everyone of what she had experienced. She left the water pot. She was no longer thirsty, just as the Lord had promised. A short while before, she was a sinner coming to the well at midday to avoid the crowds, and now she was running into the city to speak to every person she possibly could about the One who had changed her life. Many of the Samaritans believed because of her word, and the Holy Tradition tells us that she went on to become a great missionary saint, St Photini, the Enlightened one, who devoted her life to telling the world about her encounter.

*At the mid-point of the Feast, O Saviour, water my thirsty soul with streams of true devotion; for Thou didst cry out to all:
Any who thirst, let them come to me, and let them drink! O Source of life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!*

(Apolytikion of Mid-Pentecost)