



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 21—27 August 2022

SUNDAY 21 AUGUST	10th SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 17: 14-23 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 22 AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall• 5.00pm Vesper Service for Apodosis of the Dormition of the Theotokos
TUESDAY 23 AUGUST <i>Apodosis of the Dormition of the Theotokos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
WEDNESDAY 24 AUGUST <i>St Kosmas of Aitola</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SATURDAY 27 AUGUST <i>St Phanourios, Great-Martyr</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SUNDAY 28 AUGUST	GOSPEL READING: Matthew 18: 23-35 EPISTLE READING: 1Corinthians 9: 2 -12

*On Apodosis of The Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos we commemorate
Panagia tou Harou whose icon is enthroned at our Parish*

Panagia tou Harou is the name of the unique icon which depicts the Virgin Mary cradling the crucified Christ, rather than the Christ child, hence its name (*haros* in Greek means "death").

10th SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 17: 14-23

Transfigured by Humility: A Homily on Faith, Prayer, and Fasting for the 10th Sunday after Pentecost in the Orthodox Church

It is easy to become discouraged by the distortions of Christianity in our culture. Some preach that those who truly believe will become rich and healthy with no problems at all. More assume that following Jesus Christ is just another way to have a bit of inner peace as they pursue what is really important in life: professional success, personal fulfilment, or some other worldly goal on their own terms. Neither approach, however, has much to do with truly participating in the life of our Lord.

Even a quick glance at Jesus Christ, His mother the Theotokos, or apostles such as St. Paul shows how weak such teachings are. They did not live what any mainstream culture—then or now—thinks of as a happy or successful life. Obviously, they lived the best and holiest of lives; they are models for us in how to live, to die, and enter into glory. But they appear strange to the world because they put the Kingdom of God first and refused to put even their own happiness before God's will and the humble service of others. They suffered horribly by conventional standards, but thereby participated in a blessedness not of this world.

The Son of God lowered Himself in the Incarnation, becoming one of us and even enduring death and descent to Hades in order to conquer them and bring us into His eternal life through His resurrection. He was rejected by the leaders of His own people and brutally executed by the Roman authorities. The Theotokos accepted a scandalous pregnancy as the Lord's virgin mother and saw her Son murdered by those He came to save. St. Paul endured hardships of all kinds, beatings, imprisonment, and ultimately martyrdom for Christ. These were not wealthy people; their lives did not follow conventional patterns; they were not in favour with the religious and political authorities of their day. They were outsiders and outcasts in many ways, but it was precisely through their difficult struggles that salvation has come to the world and we have inherited the blessings of life eternal.

...../

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.

That is an important truth to keep in mind when we read of the father of the epileptic boy kneeling before Christ to ask for the healing of his son. The disciples had been unable to cure him because of their lack of faith, prayer, and fasting. Consequently, they lacked the spiritual strength to overcome evil. Like most of the other Jews, they

probably assumed that following the Messiah—thought to be a great king and military ruler— would result in a privileged life. In their hopes for that kind of saviour, the disciples were part of a “faithless and perverse” generation that trusted in and served itself, rather than the one true God.

In contrast, the boy’s father had true faith, trust and humility before the Lord, kneeling down before him and asking for mercy from the bottom of his heart. He lowered himself before Christ, putting himself in the lowly place of one who could receive the blessing of the most humble One of all.

Unfortunately, many in the church of Corinth were nothing like that father; they were so full of pride that St. Paul had to set them straight on what it meant to serve Jesus Christ. He wrote that true apostles lived like “men sentenced to death,” as fools who are weak, dishonoured, homeless, and treated as the filth of the world. There was not a path for the rich and famous. The words used by St. Paul of his own ministry remind us of how our Lord identified Himself with “the least of these,” the hungry, the stranger, the prisoner, the sick—those on the margins of any society.

How ironic that the same Lord Who identified Himself with the wretched and miserable, and whose apostles suffered so greatly, was transfigured in glory before His disciples on Mt. Tabor. As He shone with the brilliant light of heaven and was shown to be superior to Moses and Elijah, the voice of the Father said “This is my beloved Son with Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” The divine glory of this most exalted One shines through the apparent weakness of a cross and a tomb, through what looked like failure and foolishness in the world as we know it. Indeed, He glorifies martyrs, confessors, and others who truly take up their crosses and die to the idolatry of self that is the real religion of so many, regardless of what we say we believe. To this very day, those who share in His glory first participate in His lowliness, meekness, and humility.

Despite what some of Christianity’s supporters and some of its foes like to say, our Lord’s salvation is not an extension of any earthly kingdom, culture, or achievement. Instead of building ourselves up according to designs of false gods, we must lower ourselves before Him like the father of the epileptic in order to be transfigured by His grace. We must go against the popular trends of our culture—and of any culture— in order to believe, pray, and deny ourselves if we are to open ourselves to His brilliant light, if we are to become radiant with His holiness. The journey to His Kingdom has nothing to do with acquiring earthly power, prominence, or popularity. As much as in the first century, His Kingdom is still not of this world. And some of the most dangerous temptations are to distort the Christian faith in the service of any worldly goal or agenda, regardless of the name it goes by at the time.

Instead of following the easy paths today of worshiping money, power, pleasure, and other forms of self-indulgence, we must follow the advice of the Lord Himself to the disciples on the necessity of faith, prayer, and fasting. Instead of believing that success according to the standards of any earthly realm is the highest good, we must entrust our lives to the One whose divinity shines forth through His humility and Who identifies Himself with the outcasts of all times and places.

Instead of defining ourselves by our busy schedules, routines, or obsessions about other earthly cares, we must—and we all can— carve out time every day for spiritual communion with the Lord. Instead of satisfying every desire and wallowing in unrestrained indulgence, we must learn to say no to our addiction to pleasure through appropriate forms of fasting and self-denial on a regular basis. Instead of making our faith a way to get what we want and gain the praise of others, we must learn the essential place of humility in the Christian life. For it is only when we stop focusing on ourselves—our strengths, our virtues, our abilities, as well as our failures and weaknesses—that we will be able to kneel before Christ like that father who was at the end of his rope and open ourselves to the mercy and healing of the Lord.

We have to accept that it is not all about us. If we make our faith basically about helping us get what we want, then we will always serve ourselves and become addicted to self-centred desires. We will become so enslaved to our bellies, our entertainment, our will, and our false hopes for fulfilment that we will become just like the disciples: powerless against the forces of evil in our own lives and totally unable to help others. If we serve and please only ourselves, we will become so self-focused and self-centred that we will find it impossible to cultivate the humility required to serve God and our neighbours. We will become so addicted to our desires that we will lack the ability to say no to ourselves for any reason, which is ultimately a recipe for nothing but despair.

Far better to look to Christ who came not to be served, but to serve, and Whose glory had nothing in common with worldly domination or success. He will transfigure us into participants in His divine glory through our humble faith, prayer, and fasting. In this season of the Dormition Fast, we follow the example of the Theotokos who was prepared and sustained for her sublime ministry by these spiritual disciplines. The same is true of St. Paul and the apostles.

There is hard work involved when we embrace humility, obedience, and self-denial. Should that be surprising if we serve a Lord Who told us to take up our crosses and follow Him? If our goal is to become so permeated with holiness that we radiate the divine beauty, should we be shocked that sacrifice is required?

By investing ourselves in the basic disciplines of the Christian life we will become more like the father of the epileptic boy who, in his humble faith, received the mercy and healing of the Lord. That is a blessing beyond the ability of this world and the only hope for the salvation of our souls.

- Fr Philip LeMasters