



## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program for 24—30 July 2022

<b>SUNDAY 24 JULY</b>	<b>6th SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 9: 1-8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>2022 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES</b> (A free voluntary program organised by the Church) <b>Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at 10.30am until Church dismissal.</b> 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.	
<b>MONDAY 25 JULY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 9.00am Paraklesis to the Theotokos</li><li>• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall</li></ul>
<b>TUESDAY 26 JULY</b> <i>Martyr St Paraskevi</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY 27 JULY</b> <i>St Panteleimon, Great Martyr</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>SUNDAY 31 JULY</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Matthew 9: 27-35</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: Romans 15: 1-7</b>

### Apolytikion for St Paraskevi

Your diligence corresponded to your name, Paraskevi, which denotes preparedness. Through Faith you inherited the promised dwelling that was prepared for you, O prize-winning Martyr. Therefore you pour out cures and healings, and you intercede on behalf of our Souls.

### Prayer Is An Endless Creation

Humbleness is essential for prayer -

No matter how daunting and difficult the struggle of purifying the heart may be, nothing should deter us from this undertaking. We have on our side the ineffable goodness of a God Who has made man's heart His personal concern and goal. In the book of Job, we read the following astonishing words:

*"What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment..." (Job 7:17-19).*

We sense God, Who is incomprehensible, pursuing man's heart:

*"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).*

He knocks at the door of our heart, but He also encourages us to knock at the door of His mercy:

*"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Lk. 11:9-10).*

When the two doors that are God's goodness and man's heart open, then the greatest miracle of our existence occurs: man's heart is united with the Spirit of the Lord, God feasting with the sons of men.

Let us not fail to humble our spirit. If we acquire this blessed habit, many of our faults will be corrected. For example, the thought may come to mind that we have grieved our brother, and we know that in order to be pleasing to God and to remain in His presence we must be reconciled to the person we have grieved. In order to enter Paradise, one must have a heart as wide as the heavens, a heart that embraces all men. If a heart excludes even just one person, it will not be accepted by the Lord because He will not be able to dwell in it.

### 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.

Prayer is an endless creation; it is a school that teaches us to remain in the presence of the Lord. This effort to remain with the Lord is an exercise that finally overcomes death, which is why our prayer must be neither superficial nor mechanical. We must unite mind and heart in order to learn true mental prayer, in other words, we must pray with our whole inner being, with all our mind and heart.

Prayer is a school, and humility is the key to success in this discipline. Let us be humble. Let us have the certainty of our own nothingness before God, knowing that the only thing that makes us truly human is the breath that our God and Creator has breathed into us. In every other respect we are earth, and earth is trodden underfoot. What makes us truly precious is the breath of God, received by us at the time of our creation and at our re-creation in holy baptism. This breath is what makes us the image and likeness of God.

by Archimandrite Zacharias, *The Hidden Man of the Heart*

### **6th SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 9: 1-8**

When we come to Church we are constantly exposed to the words of the gospels and all of the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes when we are "over-exposed" we take what we are hearing or reading for granted. One of the most important aspects of our spiritual life is to continue to see everything with new eyes. We are reminded not to take anything in our life for granted. Like the young man who works hard to woo the woman of his dreams. He hopes and prays and dreams of making her his wife. But what does he do once he has this woman as his wife? How does he treat her? Does he approach her each day with renewed enthusiasm and with a fresh sense of love? Or does he neglect her and consider her boring and old news? Does he mistreat her or does he live each day to work for her and show her unending love? This is how we approach the gospel of Jesus Christ; with renewed enthusiasm on a daily basis. If we feel that the gospel has gotten old or stale, it is possible, that we are the ones who are in fact old and stale and we require a renewal of heart and mind.

Today's reading tells us that the Lord came into his own city and that there was brought to Him a paralytic (one who is paralysed). It is impossible for us to imagine the torture and struggle of someone who is paralysed. But perhaps it is not hard for us to imagine the possibility of being paralysed with fear. Some are paralysed with anxiety and worry. Some are paralysed by their addictions. Some are paralysed by their hate for others or the grudges they hold. We can also be paralysed by extremely difficult situations, many of which are outside our control. Most importantly, we are all paralysed by sin. It paralyses us from doing good and more than this, it paralyses us from entering into a deep relationship with our Master and Lord.

What we see in today's gospel is that the Lord's first concern is not necessarily our first concern. The people who carried the paralysed man on his stretcher were concerned with his physical sickness but the Lord Jesus Christ went straight to the most important matter, the paralytic's spiritual condition. The Lord doesn't begin by healing the man and allowing him to walk. He begins by healing his soul so that he might walk towards God. As St. Macarius of Optina once said "The soul is greater than the body: the body becomes sick, and with that it is finished. But a spiritual sickness extends into eternity. Deliver us, O lord, from such illness, and grant us healing."

Many times I have read this passage and been completely overwhelmed by the words of Jesus, by His mercy and tenderness, not only for this man, but for each of us. When we are young we don't really understand that we are sinners. As we get grow and mature we begin to see just how difficult it is to be faithful to God and to live the life that God intended for us. We begin to realize that we are not perfect. At times the realization that we are not perfect can be a difficult burden. It can weigh us down along with our sins. But I thank God that He is really full of abundant mercy and He continually says to each of us who come to Him "Take heart, my son (or daughter), your sins are forgiven." Do we realize how amazing this is? These are words we take for granted but we shouldn't.

The freedom from sin completely changes the equation of our lives. We may have some terrible and difficult situations, but God is offering us liberty from the worst type of bondage that mankind has ever known. The Lord began this liberation from the tree of the cross, but it doesn't end there. And it doesn't end by making a declaration for the Lord Jesus and moving on with our lives. That sounds more like magic than a transformational faith. Ours is a continual renewal of our spiritual life and this comes through the life that Christ imparts to us by His grace. This is not simply a nice idea or wishful thinking, it happens through our baptism and in our continued immersion in Christ and His Church.

This grace of Jesus Christ is seen in this passage as the man never asks for anything at all. The Lord sees him and knows his deepest needs. In fact, He sees past his outside appearance to the man's heart. Do we ever stop to think about how God can see straight into our hearts? He knows what we are made of, He knows what we desire, He knows our sicknesses and infirmities of soul. So there is no use to running and pretending. He sees straight through each of us. He helped the man who could not help himself in any way. But you and I are not completely helpless. Christ can help us if we can acknowledge that we are also paralysed and in need of His powerful healing, and if we are willing to come to the place that offers healing.

St. John Chrysostom writing in the 4<sup>th</sup> century says "The Church is a hospital, and not a courtroom, for souls. She does not condemn on behalf of sins, but grants remission of sins. Nothing is so joyous in our life as the thanksgiving that we experience in the Church. In the Church, the joyful sustain their joy. In the Church, those worried acquire merriment, and those saddened, joy. In the Church, the troubled find relief, and the heavy-laden, rest. "Come," says the Lord, "near me, all of you who labour and are heavy-laden (with trials and sins), and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) What could be more desirable than to meet this voice? What is sweeter than this invitation? The Lord is calling you to the Church for a rich banquet. He transfers you from struggles to rest, and from tortures to relief. He relieves you from the burden of your sins. He heals worries with thanksgiving, and sadness with joy. No one is truly free or joyful besides he who lives for Christ. Such a person overcomes all evil and does not fear anything!"

May Christ our Lord grant us all of this and may He heal us of our deep paralysis so that we may begin to run towards Him with strength, fervour and love. Glory be to God forever AMEN.