



Parish Information Bulletin

23—29 October 2022

SUNDAY 23 OCTOBER <i>St James, Brother of the Lord</i>	6th SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 8: 27-39 <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 24 OCTOBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
WEDNESDAY 26 OCTOBER <i>St Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos• 7.00pm— Divine Liturgy in English
THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8.00—9.00pm ➡ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP (In Church Hall upstairs behind Church) ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME
FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER <i>Holy Protection of the Theotokos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SUNDAY 30 OCTOBER	GOSPEL READING: Luke 16: 19-31 EPISTLE READING: 2 Corinthians 11:31—12:9

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.

ST TABITHA - COMMEMORATED ON 25 OCTOBER

Saint Tabitha, the widow raised from the dead by the Apostle Peter, was a virtuous and kindly woman, who belonged to the Christian community in Joppa.

Metropolitan of Pisidia Sotirios †

Sermon on the feast day of the holy martyrs Demetrios and Nestor—26 and 27 October

October 27th is the day the Church honours the Martyr St. Nestor, whose life and martyrdom are directly linked to the glorious Martyr St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki. It is for this reason that the lives and testimony of these famous saints be studied together.

In the beginning of the 4th Century, The pagan Roman emperors continued their cruel three hundred year persecution of Christians. In the midst of these hard times, lived St. Nestor, whom we celebrate today, and St. Demetrios, who was celebrated yesterday.

St. Demetrios was born and raised in Thessaloniki. His parents belonged to high society, and had taken care to give their son an extensive education. This education, along with his rare physical and spiritual gifts given by God, distinguished him in society. So much so, that his reputation reached the ears of the Emperor himself, Maximian Galerius. Acknowledging his gifts, he made him a general in the army and governor of the region.

Despite his high position, St. Demetrios did not fail as a Christian to preach and teach with a missionary zeal. He served as a light for the idolatrous Thessalonians, leading them to Christ and His truth. When the Emperor heard of this, he ordered St. Demetrios to be brought before him. The Saint then boldly confessed his faith in Christ. As a result, he was imprisoned in an old public bathroom next to the stadium. There he suffered much hardship and tortures.

In 305 AD, the lords of the city organized fights and duels in the stadiums of Thessaloniki. During one of these contests, the great gladiator Lyaeus appeared in the middle of the stadium, loudly taunting the Christians: "Whoever dares, come and fight with me! Let's see if your God will save you, who you believe to be stronger than ours!" With his sword in hand, he stood undefeated. Among those present in the stadium was a young Christian named Nestor, who was a student of St. Demetrios. He was very upset to hear these mocking words against the true God. Wanting to show the crowds the power of the God of Christians, he went to the prison where St. Demetrios was, to obtain his prayers and blessing to fight Lyaeus. With this done, he entered the stadium and challenged Lyaeus. Crying out: "God of Demetrios help me!" he defeated and killed the gladiator. This made the Emperor Maximian very angry, and he gave the order for both

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St. Nestor and St. Demetrios to be executed. The soldiers beheaded St. Nestor in the stadium, and then went to the prison where they killed St. Demetrios with lances.

Naturally, these shocking events strengthened the faith of Christians, and confounded the pagans. They began to see the Christians in a different way. Later, at the tomb of St. Demetrios (where he was martyred), myrrh began to stream forth. Many people came quickly to receive this myrrh, in which many miracles were done.

My brothers and sisters, we as Christians are not facing the same level of persecutions that the Holy Martyrs mentioned today endured, although there are still countries that persecute Christians. Our own challenges are different. How do we deal with them?

St. Demetrios was a high official, and in constant danger of arrest. Despite this, he still taught the young people about Christ. He inspired them with strong faith, courage, and even the spirit of sacrifice for Christ's sake. Do we have this same courage, or are we timid? Do we fear being thought of as "backwards?" St. Nestor refused to allow Lyaeus to mock and blaspheme Christ. How do we respond when we hear such slanderous disdain and insults towards Christ and His Church? When the Saint decided to face Lyaeus, he did not rely on his own power, but on the power of Christ. He first ran to beg St. Demetrios to intercede for him with God, and received a blessing to succeed in his struggle. When he finally confronted the gladiator, he sought the help of the true God, whom his teacher St. Demetrios believed in. So it was only natural that he gave credit for the victory not to himself, but to God and St. Demetrios, who interceded for him and gave him strength. Do we give thanks to God and those who helped us? Or do we selfishly claim glory for ourselves, bragging and boasting?

My brothers and sisters, May the Lord, by the intercessions of Sts. Demetrios and Nestor, with all the Saints, increase faith, boldness and love for Christ in our souls. May we receive many spiritual victories in the struggle against the visible and invisible enemies of Christ. Amen.

The Feast of the Protection of the Theotokos

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction

Throughout the Scriptures and the history of the Church, we learn that God reveals Himself and the workings of His providence to those who are worthy, to those He chooses.

In the year that King Uzziah died, the prophet Isaiah tells us he was granted a glimpse of the holiness of God when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, surrounded by seraphim who cried "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:1-3). When Jesus came to be baptized, John the Baptist said that he saw the Spirit descending upon Him as a dove and therein knew that He was the Son of God (Cf. John 1:29-34). The Protomartyr Stephen, at his martyrdom, looked up and saw the heavens open and the glory of God with Jesus, the Son of Man, sitting at the right hand of God, into whose bosom he was about to be received (Acts 6:55-56). Moreover, today, the veil of our present reality is pulled back and Sts. Andrew and Epiphanius see the Mother of God with a host of saints and understood that she was praying for the whole world. Today we commemorate this event.

Narration

In the 10th Century, the Mother of God appeared in a Church on outskirts of Constantinople called Blachernae. This church was second in prominence after the Hagia Sophia and was a significant site of pilgrimage as it housed many holy objects including the robe, veil, and part of the belt of the Theotokos.

At the fourth hour of the night, the Mother of God came into the Church surrounded by angels and saints, as was seen only by St. Andrew, the fool-for-Christ (commemorated on Oct. 2) who was there with his disciple St. Epiphanius. She knelt in the church in prayer and then arose and went into the altar. Afterward, she came out of the altar, took off her veil and covered all those assembled who were there. It is from this action that the name of our present feast comes, as the Russian word *pokrov* (Покров) and the Greek word *skepê* (Σκέπη) both have a meaning which refers to a veil or shroud and also to protection or intercession.

The Prayers of the Mother of God for Us

One significant meaning we find regarding this feast, a miraculous event that happened over a millennium ago, is that it reassures us of the Mother of God's intercessions and prayers to God for us. Moreover, when the veil of reality is pulled back, we are shown a glimpse of what is going on in that world of which the so-called "ordinary" functioning of our senses cannot perceive. What is happening is that those living in the heavenly realm are praying for us and, more specifically, as relates to our feast today the Mother of God is – praying for us, protecting us, interceding for us to Christ.

Conclusion

Who is this who prays for us?

It is she to whom the Archangel spoke, whom the Holy Spirit overshadowed, and from whose virginal womb the fullness of the Godhead was born in the flesh, taking His flesh from her.

It is she about whom her cousin proclaimed, "Blessed are you among women" to which she prophesied, "From henceforth, all generation shall call me blessed" (Cf. Luke 1:42, 48).

It is she who is the rod of Aaron who miraculously sprouted forth Christ;

It is she who is the unburnt bush, not singed by the divinity;

It is she who is the East Gate the only gate through which the Great Priest came.

It is she who prays to Christ for you and by the grace given to her, protects you and shelters you.

And may she protect each and everyone one of us from the snares of the Devil and protect the whole Church of Christ in these difficult times.

Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.