



Parish Information Bulletin

11—17 December 2022

SUNDAY 11 DECEMBER	11th SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 14: 16-24 <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 12 DECEMBER <i>St Spyridon the Wonderworker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos
THURSDAY 15 DECEMBER <i>St Eleutherios and Anthia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 8.00—9.00pm ➡ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP (FINAL MEETING FOR 2022) (In Church Hall upstairs behind Church) ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME
SATURDAY 17 DECEMBER <i>St Dionysios of Zakynthos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SUNDAY 18 DECEMBER	GOSPEL READING: Matthew 1: 1-25 EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 11: 9-10, 32-40

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.

Apolytikion of St. Eleutherios the Hieromartyr Commemorated 15 December

Adorned with flowing priestly vesture and with dripping streams of blood you at once went to your Lord Christ,
O blessed wise Eleftherios, annihilator of Satan. Wherefore, do not cease to intercede for those who honour your
blessed struggles in faith.

Attending Church

When the time comes, and especially the time put aside for God and His temple, a feast day or the hour of Divine Services, hurry to tear yourself away from business and worldly cares and voluntarily and zealously offer yourself to God in His church. When you enter the church bring to mind the promise of the Lord to those that gather in His name: *there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. 18:20), and stand reverently in church, as before the very face of Christ, and pray to Him that he sanctify you by His holiness, animate you by His prayer, and enlighten you with the word of the Gospel and the Grace of the Mysteries.

Take note of this, too: in the church, angels serve with us and guard the holiness dwelling there. Once, in the Lavra of Saint Theodosius near Jerusalem, Abba Leontius, coming one Sunday to church to receive the Holy Mysteries, saw an angel standing on the right side of the Holy Table, and when the elder, being afraid, turned to run to his cell, the voice of the angel called to him: "From the time this Holy Table was consecrated, I have been charged to stay by it."

Remember this, beloved, and stand reverently. And, if you feel that only your body is standing in church, while your mind thinks of home, or the market, or a place of merriment, collect yourself. Hurry to bring back your mind that has strayed, join it to God in your heart, force it to strive towards God, Who looks upon you. When you hear the word of God, open up not only your bodily ears, but your spiritual ones as well, open your heart, receive this heavenly Bread and with it nourish not only your memory, but also your life and work.

- St. Paisius Velichkovsky

11th SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 14: 16-24

"Come, for all things are now ready" (Luke 14:11-32)

Dearly beloved in Christ, today's Gospel Lesson relates to us the Parable of the Great Supper. Luke quotes it for us as a portion of the table-talk (conversation) of Jesus at the house of Simon the Pharisee. He informs us that a rich man gave a feast to which he invited many people. In accordance with the custom of those days, he sent his servants to the invited guests to remind them of the banquet.

"Come; for all things are now ready." However, three of the invited guests gave the servants their regrets, offering various excuses for being unable to accept the proffered invitations.

The first had just bought a field, and had to inspect his new purchase. We presume that he had not bought the field without looking at it, but property ownership often produces arrogance in man, and he goes off to feast his eyes upon his new purchase, and to tell himself again and again, "It is mine — all mine."

The second had just bought five yoke of oxen, and at that very moment was obliged to test them. Presumably he had not been cheated into paying good money for lame or blind oxen, but here was a man caught up in the demands of big business; he was not about to break away for something so stupid as a pleasant social evening with his neighbours. He couldn't understand how the other invited guests could find time to waste at such a silly affair. Business, as everyone knows, comes first. Probably he fancied himself the only sane man in the community.

The third man had recently married, and therefore could not come. The other two guests at least offered excuses; this one merely said gruffly, "I cannot come."

What is the meaning of the parable, dear brethren? The Great Feast is the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of the Lord. The servants are the priests. The rich man is God Himself. The invited guests are all who have been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. We are talking here about the Divine Liturgy.

What do we know, beloved, about the Holy Eucharist? It is a Sacrament, at the celebration of which we receive, under the visible forms of bread and wine, the actual Body and Blood of Him who became incarnate for us and died for our salvation. The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist was instituted by our Lord at the Last Supper. There He offered to His disciples the bread, with the words, "Take; eat; this is my Body." There He offered the cup, with the words, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my Blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins." He then exhorted them to maintain this observance in His memory until His coming again.

The essence of the Holy Eucharist is this: whoever approaches it with faith, reverence and purity truly partakes of the very life of Christ, and becomes one with Him, united with His Body and Blood, a living branch joined to the true Vine, in which he is nourished and flourishes.

Every believer should participate in the Holy Communion as often as possible, in order to rekindle within himself the flame of divine life. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit if separated from the vine, neither can we lead fruitful lives, unless we abide in Christ.

Professor Ernest Benz, a German Protestant and a profound theologian, describes Orthodox worship as follows:

In the Eastern Greek liturgy, the earthly congregation experiences the presence of the Lord. Within the Mystical Body there takes place a unique communication, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power to forgive sins, to transmit salvation, to suffer by proxy for one another. The power of intercession becomes effective, and these powers extend to the domain of the dead, for God is the Lord of the living, not the dead.

Our Lord invites us today to participate in His Great Feast. "Come; for all things are now ready." I cannot believe that any of our beloved Greek Orthodox faithful will refuse the Lord's invitation this Christmas.

Whoever approaches the Holy Chalice, be he clergy or laity, must approach only after proper preparation; after fasting; after repentance and confession to God in the presence of a priest (Sacrament of Penance). As St. Paul writes, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (I Corinthians 11:27).

I conclude my sermon this morning with a true story. In ancient times, Alexander the Great visited the city of Athens. There he met the humble philosopher Diogenes, who was lying down taking a sun bath. Alexander the Great stood by Diogenes, introduced himself, and began to recite all of his titles and achievements. After Alexander had concluded, he asked Diogenes, in a condescending manner, if there was anything that he, the great Alexander, could do for Diogenes. Diogenes, without rising, merely motioned with his hand, and asked if the Great Alexander would kindly step a little to the side, since he was blocking the sun.

Diogenes had a true sense of values. With all of his achievements and titles, Alexander was to Diogenes a mere mortal, and the sun was far more desirable, far more valuable.

In the same way, beloved, our everyday concerns sometimes hide our view of Christ, who is our Sun. Just as every human being, plant and animal needs the sun, even more so do we need our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, without whom true life would be impossible.

Source: *"Orthodox Sermons"* -Rev. George Dimopoulos