



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 26 February—4 March 2023

SUNDAY 26 FEBRUARY

Cheesefare Sunday—Matthew 6: 14-21

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 6.30pm Vespers of Forgiveness
Holy Monastery Axion Esti, Northcote

2023 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES - BEGINS ON 5 MARCH 2023

(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 27 FEBRUARY

Clean Monday Beginning of Lent

- 9.00am
Service of Holy Unction
- 10.00am
Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
- 5.00pm
Service of Great Compline with 1st section of the Great Canon

TUESDAY 28 FEBRUARY

- 5.00pm
Service of Great Compline with 2nd section of the Great Canon

WEDNESDAY 1 MARCH

- 8.00am
Service of Pre-sanctified Liturgy
- 5.00pm
Service of Great Compline with 3rd section of the Great Canon

THURSDAY 2 MARCH

- 5.00pm
Service of Great Compline with 4th section of the Great Canon

FRIDAY 3 MARCH

- 6.00pm
Service of Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos— First Salutations to the Theotokos

SATURDAY 4 MARCH

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 5 MARCH

GOSPEL READING: John 1: 43-51

EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 11: 24-26, 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.

The Sunday of Forgiveness is the last Sunday prior to the commencement of Great Lent. During the pre-Lenten period, the services of the Church include hymns from the Triodion, a liturgical book that contains the services from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), through Great and Holy Saturday.

On the Sunday of Forgiveness focus is placed on the exile of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, an event that shows us how far we have fallen in sin and separated ourselves from God. At the onset of Great Lent and a period of intense fasting, this Sunday reminds us of our need for God's forgiveness and guides our hearts, minds, and spiritual efforts on returning to Him in repentance.



Even in His agony on the Cross the Lord Jesus did not condemn sinners, but held up before His Father forgiveness for their sins, saying: 'they know not what they do!' Let us judge no man, that we be not condemned. For no-one is certain that he will not, before his death, commit that very sin for which he has condemned his brother.

St Anastasius of Sinai teaches: 'If you see someone sinning, do not condemn him, for you do not know how he will finish his life. That thief crucified with Christ was a murderer, and Judas was an apostle of Christ's, but the thief entered Paradise and Judas went to perdition.

If you see someone sin, you do not know his good works. For many sin in public and repent in private, and we see their sin but do not know of their repentance.

Therefore, my brethren, let us condemn no man, that we be not condemned.'

Cheesefare Sunday—Matthew 6: 14-21

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY: A WORD ON FORGIVENESS

In her enduring wisdom and love for mankind, the Church provides us with a period of preparation before we enter Great Lent. We have passed through the Sundays of Zacchaeus, the Publican and the Pharisee, the Last Judgment, and now finally with today – the Sunday which commemorates the expulsion of Adam from Paradise.

In each of these preparatory Sundays, forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel message. In his great zeal to meet the Lord, Zacchaeus confessed his sins and repented by giving back four-fold his ill-gotten gains. The publican asks for forgiveness through his heartfelt “have mercy upon me, a sinner.” The Sunday of the Last Judgment reminds us that Christ will judge us according to the extent that we were merciful and forgiving of others. Finally, Forgiveness Sunday recalls Adam’s sin and more importantly, his unwillingness to ask for forgiveness. Reflecting upon this ancestral sin, Abba Dorotheos writes:

Again, after his fall, God gave him an occasion to repent and to receive mercy, but he kept his stiff neck held high. He came to him and said ‘Adam, Where are you?’ instead of saying ‘What glory you have left and what dishonour you have arrived at?’ After that, He asked him ‘Why did you sin? Why did you transgress the commandment?’ By asking these questions, He wanted to give him the opportunity to say, ‘Forgive me.’ However, he did not ask for forgiveness. There was no humility, there was no repentance, but indeed the opposite. (Practical Teaching on the Christian Life)

The ability to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others is at the heart of the spiritual life. There can be no spiritual growth without these two components. In Saint Matthew’s Gospel, the Lord tells His disciples, “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matthew 7:2).

Great Lent is a period of grace given to us to demonstrate in concrete actions and words our forgiveness of others who have wronged us. Our father among the saints, the righteous John of Kronstadt, is quoted as saying:

Imagine, picture the multitude of your sins and imagine how tolerant of them is the Master of your life, while you are unwilling to forgive your neighbour even the smallest offence. Moan and bewail your foolishness, and that obstruction within you will vanish like smoke, you will think more clearly, your heart will grow calm, and through this you will learn goodness, as if not you yourself had heard the reproaches and indignities, but some other person entirely, or a shadow of yourself. (Lessons on a Life of Grace)

Pride is at the root of our unwillingness to forgive. We may protest by saying that our unwillingness to forgive is justified in some way but the appeal to justice is a two-edged sword. As Saint Paul writes to the Romans, “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). It is much more profitable spiritually for us to appeal to mercy. If we are able to overlook the sins of others and show mercy, mercy will be shown to us as well.

Just as pride is the root of hard-heartedness, humility is the key to forgiveness. Abba Anthony said, “I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world, and I said groaning, ‘What can get through from such snares?’ Then I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Humility.’”

Our first task during Great Lent and every day of our lives is found in the Gospel: “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24).

If we seek the Lord’s forgiveness, we must forgive our brothers and sisters from our heart. This is the task and the opportunity of Great Lent. A blessed fast to you all.



Although the holy fathers praised monasticism as the angelic state, and although many of the greatest saints spent their lives and achieved perfection in the silent and lifeless desert, nevertheless the Orthodox Church does not recommend monasticism to all the faithful. ‘Neither will all those in the desert be saved, nor all those in the world be lost’, said one saint.

To one city-dweller who, without any inclination to monasticism had made up his mind to go to a monastery, St Niphon said: ‘My son, a man is neither saved nor lost by the place he is in, but is saved or lost by his deeds. Neither a holy place nor a holy state is of use to him who does not fulfil the commandments of the Lord. Saul lived in regal luxury and perished. David lived in like luxury and received the wreath. Lot lived among the lawless Sodomites and was saved. Judas was among the apostles and went to hell. Whoever says that it is impossible to be saved with a wife and children is a deceiver. Abraham had a wife and children and three hundred and eighteen servants, and also much gold and silver, and he was called the friend of God! Many servants of the Church have been saved, and many lovers of the desert; many aristocrats, and many soldiers; many craftsmen, and many farm labourers. Be devout toward God and loving towards men, and you will be saved.’