



## Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 28 May—3 June, 2023

### Telephone Contact Numbers

St Vasilios Church  
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Fr Athanasios  
9383 4151

Fr Ephraim  
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Website:  
[stvasiliosbrunswick.com](http://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.

SUNDAY 28 MAY	Fathers of the First Council, John 17: 1-13 • 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
<b>2023 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES - 2023</b> (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 29 MAY	• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
WEDNESDAY 31 MAY	• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos
THURSDAY 1 JUNE	• 8.00—9.00pm ➡ <b>TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP 2023</b> <b>ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME</b> Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment. * In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church
SATURDAY 3 JUNE <i>Saturday of Souls</i>	• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SUNDAY 4 JUNE	GOSPEL READING: John 7: 37-52, 8:12 EPISTLE READING: Acts 2: 1-11

### Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

The Orthodox Church today prayerfully remembers the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, which once met in the city of Nicaea in order to investigate and judge the heresy of Arius. We know that in the first centuries of Christianity, the Church endured severe persecution, first from the Jews and then from the pagan Roman imperial power. But despite the fact that the persecution was bloody, despite the fact that thousands of Christians died under torture for their confession of faith, nonetheless, it was not dangerous for the Church.

The Christian of the first centuries remembered well that the Lord Jesus Christ said: *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the sou: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Mt 10:28). And in the Apocalypse He said: "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev 2:10). In these bloody persecutions Christians were faithful to death, went to martyr's death, and received from the Lord Saviour the crown of eternal life earned by them.

When the era of persecution ended, another began. This was much more dangerous for the Church. Then inside the Church appeared heresy, delusion, and distortion of the truth. They appeared immediately, but the first were not much noticed, and did not attract many followers. The heresy of Arius, which appeared when the persecution had ended, agitated the entire Church. Arius was a scholar and an eloquent presbyter, that is, a priest – a pastor in the city of Alexandria. The bishop of Alexandria died. At that time the flock choose its own pastors. The eloquent, educated Arius, who held a prominent position, was certain that he would be chosen, and that he would be the bishop. But the majority of the clergy and people chose another bishop, the presbyter Alexander, who was also well read, educated, and knowledgeable. He was not as outstanding and talented as Arius, but he was

marked by his piety, and was truly of righteous and holy life. For this reason the clergy and flock honoured him and elected him.

This piqued Arius' wounded self-love. Unfortunately, this is always the story in the history of heresies. In the beginning there lies an evil motive, an evil impulse of a personal character, which is wrapped in a robe as a kind of fidelity to truth.

Thus Arius, in his self-love, decided to speak out against his own bishop – he could not accept the fact that he was not a bishop. Once Bishop Alexander spoke with his clergy about the Mystery of the Holy Trinity, about the equality of its Persons, that the Holy Trinity is a Trinity of Unity, inasmuch as in three Persons there is One Divine Essence, One Divine Nature. Arius boldly stood up and began to contradict him and began to assert that the Son of God is not equal to God the Father, as Bishop Alexander had said, or not born of Him, but created by Him, as a creature, as creation. True, higher, more perfect, but still creation, a creature. Alexander tried to reason with gentle admonitions to reason with Arius, but he persevered. And since he was eloquent, this heresy arose, and because of him it spread and eventually roused the entire Church.

Alexander, as a bishop, excommunicated him from the Church. He left, but began to spread his doctrine further and further. In the end, the Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine himself commissioned the Elder Hosius of Cordova, well known for his piety and deep wisdom to make out what this was, what this was for a heresy. The elderly Bishop Hosius, pious and wise, arrived in Alexandria. Without any prejudice, absolutely impartial, he investigated this question, and returned and told the Emperor that Arius was preaching a horrible heresy, which subverts all of Christianity. For if the Son of God is not equal to God the Father and is not born of Him, then He is not God, but creation, which means that he was not incarnate as the true God-Man. That means that the deed of our salvation was not accomplished as our Christian faith teaches us.

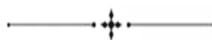
In the end, an Ecumenical Council assembled. Arius had only a few bishops on his side. The overwhelming majority of bishops (and more than 300 assembled for the Council) stood firmly for the Orthodox faith, condemned the heresy of Arius, and excommunicated him himself from the Church, as a persistent and uncorrected heretic.

This heretic died a horrible death, but his heresy agitated the Church for a long time. Only gradually did it begin to subside. It had to be fought by Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom, who lived after Arius. But, in the end, truth triumphed, but there was a moment when in the East, of all Orthodox bishops, only St Athanasius the Great remained, and in the West only St Hilary of Poitiers; all the other episcopal cathedras, hundreds of cathedras, were taken by bishops who were themselves Arian heretics.

The Church, however, was not lost. It was difficult for St Athanasius to fight with the heretics in the East. Many times he was exiled, but he remained unmoved. When he learned in his solitude that at last he had an ally, a successor, in St Basil the Great, did this great defender of Orthodoxy breathe a sigh of relief. Thus did the Church experience this heresy, that is how it was disturbed by it.

After Arius there were other heretics. They were also condemned by Ecumenical Councils. But today we remember the First Ecumenical Council, which condemned Arius and his heresy. Amen.

- METROPOLITAN PHILARET OF EASTERN AMERICAN AND NEW YORK (+1985)



## Fathers of the First Council, John 17: 1-13

In John 17:1-13, Jesus prays for us, His disciples that we may all be one – Christ prayed that we His followers would have a unity of love as exists between the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You . . . And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You gave me, that they may be one, even as we are one. . . . But now I am coming to You; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves."*

St. Silouan the Athonite (d. 1938) poetically comments:

*"The Lord said, 'I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and 'You are in me, and I in you.' Our soul feels the Lord in us, and we cannot forget Him for a single moment. What mercy is this – that the Lord desires us to be in Him and in the Father!*

*But what have we done for You, Lord,  
in what have we pleased You,  
that You do wish to be in us, and for us to be in You?  
We crucified You on the Cross with our sins,  
yet do You still wish us to be with You?*

*O, how great is Your mercy! I see Your mercy spread over me.  
I am deserving of hell and every torment,  
yet do You give me the grace of the Holy Spirit.  
And if you did vouchsafe to my sinful self  
to know You by the Holy Spirit, then I beseech You,  
O Lord, let all people come to know You."*

- St. Silouan the Athonite,