



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 11—17 June, 2023

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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.

<p>SUNDAY 11 JUNE <i>Apostles Bartholomew and Barnabas, Revelation of Axion Esti, St Luke the Surgeon, Holy Martyrs of China</i></p>	<p>1st SUNDAY OF MATTHEW—ALL SAINTS Matthew 10: 32-33, 37-38, 19: 27-30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
<p>2023 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES - 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.</p>	
<p>MONDAY 12 JUNE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
<p>WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos
<p>THURSDAY 15 JUNE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8.00—9.00pm ➡ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP 2023 ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment. * In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church
<p>SUNDAY 18 JUNE</p>	<p>GOSPEL READING: Matthew 4: 18-23 EPISTLE READING: Romans 2: 10-16</p>

Revelation of Axion Esti

It is truly meet to Bless thee, O Theotokos, Ever-Blessed, and Most Pure, and the Mother of our God.
More honourable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim.
Without corruption thou gavest birth to God the Word.
The true Theotokos, we magnify thee.

ST LUKE THE BLESSED SURGEON

Apolytikion

O Physician and Shepherd, let us all honour Luke, as Simferopol's Shepherd and a radiant Archpriest, who bore Christ's Divine marks, exiles, dangers, being locked within prisons, tribulations and persecution, for in the last days has shown forth, in Russia a new Saint.

THE HOLY MARTYRS OF CHINA

Kontakion

In recent times you imitated the martyrs of former times in your victorious contests, O blessed Saints, for you competed valiantly for Christ. Watering the holy Church of the great land of China with your blood, you have received a crown from Lord's hand.
As you are standing near Him in the heights, commemorate us who honour your martyrdom.

1st SUNDAY OF MATTHEW—ALL SAINTS, Hebrews 11:33-12:2; Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38; 19:27-30

*"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven."
(Matthew 10:32)*

Today we gather on this 1st Sunday after Pentecost to honour all of those who have lived righteous lives in following the teachings and commandments of our Lord. On this Sunday of All Saints we commemorate those who having received the grace of the Holy Spirit lived their lives in complete obedience to the command of our Lord to "confess Me before men."

We have just come through the celebration of the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Holy Pentecost and now we now see the practical result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who have been called to faithfulness: namely the saints of our Holy Orthodox Church. These two commemorations follow logically from each other: in the one we saw the power come which makes possible the lives that we now commemorate in the second. And in noticing the close connection we are able to understand the meaning of both celebrations and gain a very important insight into what these two festal celebrations mean for our own lives.

Today we have before us the examples of all the holy men and women who having received the Holy Spirit, proceeded to live their lives in light of having the Spirit working actively in their lives. For the saints that we honour today were not born as saints but rather were made saints through allowing the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to guide and transform their lives so that their lives became models of piety and holiness. And this is a very important point for us to understand, for the saints were not super human beings- like some mythical super heroes- but rather they were and are like you and I in that they share in our human nature with all of its struggles, temptations and failings. But they understood that receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit called them to live a life of holiness and faithfulness in which the quality of their lives gave clear testimony that the Holy Spirit was at work in their lives.

In the early centuries of our Orthodox Church this day was given over first as a commemoration of all the Holy Martyrs and then by the end of the First Millennium, this day has become what it is today that is a commemoration of all the righteous ones who have lived out in their lives the meaning of having received the Holy Spirit through Holy Baptism and Chrismation.

So what does all this mean for us today as we hear the same call of the Gospel as those whom we commemorate as the Righteous and Holy Saints of our Orthodox Church? In answering that question, we are called to ask ourselves another question: do we also fit the description which our Lord gives in the Gospel of those who "confess Me before men", which after all is the first character trait of a saint? In answering those question we are led to understand that by confessing Christ before men is meant not just in giving verbal assent to Christ but in giving witness to our confession through our manner of life. For how can we say we confess Christ if our way of living is at odds with that very confession of believing in Christ as our Lord and Master. For the first hallmark of one who truly confesses Christ before all men- and a key characteristic of a saint- is the testimony given by one's life. And this manner of life- what we might call holiness- is made possible because we also have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and allowed this grace to work actively in our lives so that we are lives are transformed as we live faithfully each day. Now granted this pathway of holiness, this way of living our lives and allowing the Grace of the Holy Spirit to work freely and fully in our lives is not easy. It means being willing to take up our cross and follow our Lord wherever He may call us to go; but we do so gladly if we truly are willing to confess our Lord because we understand that we have the power of the Spirit to give us the strength to give testimony to our Lord before all men even when the giving of that testimony leads us through difficult times and struggles in this earthly life.

The Holy Saints we commemorate today followed the call of Lord to confess His Holy Name through a life of holiness even though they knew that this would lead them through sufferings and struggles: they understood that the end result of living out the commands of our Lord was a far greater blessing than the temporary pain, sufferings and struggle that might need to be endured in this life.

So the question for us this morning is this: are we willing to confess our Lord before our society and live a life of holiness that gives testimony to that confess? Or do we see to hide our confession of Christ in order that we may "fit in" and be seen as "normal" by our society? For we also have heard the same call to live lives of holy faithfulness as our holy and righteous fathers and mothers in the faith did: they responded positively to this call and lived lives of holiness because they understood that this is what it meant to confess Christ. Will we follow them in this dedication to confessing our Lord before all men despite the cost? If indeed we do then we also will receive- as the Holy Saints did- the promise of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: "... him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven."

Amen.

Father Paisius McGrath



"The Lord sees your need and your efforts, and will give you a helping hand. He will support and establish you as a soldier, fully armed and ready to go into battle. No support can be better than His. The greatest danger lies in the Soul thinking that it can find this help within itself; then it will lose everything. Evil will dominate it again, eclipsing the light that as yet flickers but weakly in the Soul, and it will extinguish the small flame which is still scarcely burning. The Soul should realise how powerless it is alone; therefore, expecting nothing of itself, let it fall down in humility before God, and in its own heart recognise itself to be nothing.

Then Grace – which is all powerful – will, out of this nothing, create in it everything.

He who in total humility puts himself in the hand of the Merciful God, attracts the Lord to Himself, and becomes strong in His Strength."

Saint Theophan the Recluse