



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 10—16 December 2023

Telephone Contact Numbers

St Vasilios Church
9387 7693

Fr Athanasios
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Fr Ephraim
0490 378 215

Website:
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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.

SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER	10TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 13: 10-17 • 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
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.	
MONDAY 11 DECEMBER	• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER <i>St Spyridon the Wonderworker</i>	• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
WEDNESDAY 13 DECEMBER	• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos • 7.00pm DIVINE LITURGY IN ENGLISH
THURSDAY 14 DECEMBER	• 8.00—9.00pm ➡ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP 2023 (final group meeting for 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
FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER <i>St Eleftherios and his mother Anthia</i>	• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SUNDAY 17 DECEMBER	GOSPEL READING: Luke 14: 16-24 EPISTLE READING: Colossians 3: 4-7

We make known to all that a Greek Language School operates in our Parish.

- Primary school classes: every Saturday, from 9.00am to 12.30pm
- High School classes: every Monday, from 5.00 to 8.30pm.

For inquiries and enrolments : 0401 051773

St Spyridon the Wonderworker—12 December Apolytikion

O Father, God-bearer, Spyridon, you were proven a champion and Wonder Worker of the First Ecumenical Council. You spoke to the girl in the grave and turned the serpent to gold. And, when chanting your prayers, most sacred One, angels ministered with you. Glory to Him who glorified you; glory to Him who crowned you; glory to Him who, through you, works healing for all.

Hieromartyr Eleftherios and his mother Anthia—15 December

Saint Eleftherios came from Rome. His mother Anthia was catechized in Christian faith by Paul the Apostle and raised her son according to the teachings of the Holy Gospel and the tradition of the Church.

At the age of fifteen, Saint Eleftherios was ordained a deacon, after receiving the Christian education and discipline.

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Later, due to his spiritual struggles and virtuous life, he became Bishop of Illyricum. When informed of the strong morals and Christian activities of the young Eleftherios, the emperor Hadrian, out of envy and arrogance, ordered his arrest.

After many tortures and miraculous events, he encouraged the faithful and humiliated the arrogance and audacity of the pagans. He was then led by the pagans to the arena of Rome. The wild beasts, however, did not touch him; on the contrary, they respected him, so he was beheaded, receiving the grace of the Apostles from Jesus Christ after he became an imitator of their course.

When she hugged the dead body of her son, Saint Anthia was beheaded, remaining another example of a loving mother dedicated to the protection and promotion of her child in society.

Source: Church of Cyprus



10TH SUNDAY OF LUKE Luke 13:10-17

A Women Healed on the Sabbath

During His earthly ministry, Jesus taught and preached in the synagogues, that is, in the worship places of the Jewish people outside the Temple. The people of God would go to the Temple in Jerusalem on the High Holy Days (what Christians call the Major Feast Days), but it was at the local synagogues in their towns where they would worship every Sabbath. In this narrative, we see a woman with an infirmity attending worship, and it was by going to the house of worship that the sick woman met Jesus. A spiritual malady afflicted her with a physical manifestation (a deformity in her back). We see two important lessons. First, she continues to put her hope in God even after many years of struggle, so she endures suffering with patience and grace. Second, she is rewarded for her perseverance and faith when she meets Christ, who has compassion for her and heals her.

For eighteen years, the woman struggled with social degradation and physical pain. Still, she went to the place of worship every week to praise God. The fact that she was afflicted with this debilitating condition for so many years, and still worshiped at the synagogue, shows her unwavering faith and resilience. God's love sometimes allows suffering in our lives as a means of spiritual healing as we learn to draw closer to Him in repentance and with the recognition of our complete dependence upon Him. This is what it means to be united to Christ's sufferings. The woman went to the synagogue to worship God, and the Son of God Himself — Jesus Christ — met her there.

We notice that the woman does not say anything to Him or ask for anything — but Christ sees her. He has compassion for her, calls her, and heals her. God the Son (the Logos, the Word of God) speaks, and it is done: "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." As He laid His hands upon her, she was immediately made straight.

The laying of His hands on her shows us a pattern by which God's grace is given to us — we are persons created in body and soul, and the Lord unites us to Him also in body and soul. We sanctify and use our bodies to worship God by our crossing of ourselves, by our prostrations, etc. We receive God's grace through visible signs of created things, such as: the bread and wine for Holy Communion, the water in Baptism and Agiasmos (the blessing of the waters), the oil in the Chrismation, the laying of hands for Confession (with the epitrachelion or stole) and Ordination, and the breaking of bread in the Artoklasia. This is why the woman's physical healing is part of her entire restoration as a human being. God cares for our bodies and souls.

The woman was bent down by her sickness, similar to how sin weighs us down as a result of the Fall of Adam, setting our faces, as it were, toward the ground. Jesus, however, frees us to stand up straight, so we can set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:2). He restores us as humans made in His image and likeness, so we can "lift up our hearts" to the Lord (as we hear in the Divine Liturgy).

The woman's response is immediate as she praises God. She is moved from weakness to strength, from the ground to the heavens. Her response is one of joy and thankfulness for the God who reaches out to raise us to Him. As we pray in the Divine Liturgy, "You brought us out of nothing into being, and when we had fallen away, You raised us up again. You left nothing undone until You had led us up to heaven and granted us Your Kingdom, which is to come. For all these things, we thank You and Your only-begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit."

Our lives will inevitably face pain, sorrow, and affliction. Sometimes this is a result of our failures. Sometimes it is a result of the failures of others, sickness, or many other obstacles that are part of life in a fallen world. Despite all that, like the woman, as we come to worship God with our hearts looking for His help, He frees us from the chains that bind us. He delivers us from the infirmities of the soul, from captivity to sin, and sometimes even from physical sickness.

We also see, in this Gospel, the contrast between this woman's persevering faith and the hardened heart of the ruler of the synagogue. She praised God, whereas the ruler was indignant. He put the Law above love because he did not understand that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. For ancient Israel, God gave the Sabbath, the seventh day (what we call Saturday), as the day of rest and worship. When Christ came, He rested on Saturday and rose on the first day of the week, that is, Sunday. He renewed the very meaning of the Sabbath — not merely as a day of rest, but as a day of wholeness and rejoicing in true unity with God.

Christ presents in this passage a logical argument from lesser to greater: if we care for animals and untie them on the Sabbath so they can eat and drink, how much more does God care for us, His own children, and frees us on the Sabbath day and every day? The purpose of the Sabbath is not to avoid all activity but to use it to celebrate God's love of us, our love of Him, and His love for all humanity. As a result of God's love, human beings are more important than our sins, failures, and even rules. As Saint Nektarios of Aegina says, "Love should never be sacrificed for the sake of some dogmatic difference." Christ came to show us that the most important commandment is the commandment of love.

The ruler could not rejoice or praise God because he put rules over the love of people. The woman who persevered with faith rejoiced, praising Christ, who healed her by laying hands in the power of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such, there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23). For eighteen years of suffering, the woman had kept her faith and hope, and Christ showed her that hope does not disappoint because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Christ teaches us never to give up. He encourages us always to persevere. He never forgets us. He was always close to the woman who suffered for eighteen years. He never forgot her. Her struggle brought her closer to God because of her faith. The Lord loves us and calls us to have faith and trust in Him. It is His Grace and our actions of faith and trust in Him that pave the way toward salvation. As He freed the woman, He sets us free. We are freed by seeking God, putting our hope in Him, and worshipping Him weekly in His Church. The Sacraments, prayer, hymns, fellowship, and faith heal us. In Christ's Church, we encounter Christ and receive Him, Who frees us from the bondage of sin and grants us eternal life.

- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Dept. of Religious Education