



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 28—3 August 2024

SUNDAY 28 JULY	5TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 8: 28-34; 9:1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
2024 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 29 JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">9.00am Service of Holy Unction10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
WEDNESDAY 31 JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos
★ Please note that our Thursday TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP MEETINGS will resume again on Thursday 1 August. ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME. 8.00-9.00pm in building behind the Church	
THURSDAY 1 AUGUST PLEASE NOTE: <i>Dormition Fast: 1—14 August</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">5.30pm PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS - the Paraklesis <u>will take place daily</u> (except on 3rd, 10th August —Saturday Vespers, 5th August - Holy Transfiguration Vespers and 14th August - Holy Dormition Vespers)
FRIDAY 2 AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">5.30pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos
SUNDAY 4 AUGUST	GOSPEL READING: Matthew 9: 1-8 EPISTLE READING: Romans 12: 6-14

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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.

Thoughts

by Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica

"Our thoughts determine our whole life. If our thoughts are destructive, we will have no peace. If they are quiet, meek, and simple, our life will be the same, and we will have peace within us. It will radiate from us and influence all beings around us."

"Our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. If our thoughts are peaceful, calm, meek, and kind, then that is what our life is like. If our attention is turned to the circumstances in which we live, we are drawn into a whirlpool of thoughts and can have neither peace nor tranquillity."

"Our starting point is always wrong. Instead of beginning with ourselves, we always want to change others first and ourselves last. If everyone would begin first with themselves, then there would be peace all around!"

"I realized that we all worry about ourselves too much and that only he who leaves everything to the will of God can feel truly joyous, light, and peaceful."

"We must learn to ease the burden of thoughts that bears down upon us. As soon as we feel burdened, we must turn to the Lord and give our worries over to Him, as well as the worries and cares of our loved ones."

"The Lord has taken all of our sufferings and cares upon Himself, and He has said that He will provide for all our needs, yet we hold on to our cares so tightly that we create unrest in our hearts and minds, in our families, and all around us."

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"The Lord is present everywhere, and nothing happens without His will or His permission, either in this life or in eternity. When we accept this idea, everything is made easier. If God would allow us to do everything the way we desire and when we desire, this would certainly result in catastrophe."

"We cannot achieve salvation unless we change our thoughts and make them different.... This is achieved by the work of Divine power in us. Our minds thus become deified, free of passions, and holy. Only a mind which has God within it and a constant remembrance of the Lord can be deified. By knowing that He is in us and we are in Him, we can move around like fish in the water. He is everywhere, and we, like the fish, swim in Him. As soon as we leave Him, we die spiritually."

- *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: the Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica*



Sermon on the Apostolic Reading for the 5th Sunday of Matthew (Romans 10: 1-10)

Metropolitan of Pisidia Sotirios †

In our reading from the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul lays before us two basic truths, which are of particular interest for us today. The first, is that we should desire and seek the salvation of our people with all of our hearts. Not only those close to us, but all people. Second, the Holy Apostle tells us that the salvation offered by Christ is open to all, and is within reach for those who turn to Him.

St. Paul retained great zeal for the salvation for his own people, the Jewish people. Saul (St. Paul's Jewish name), from the time he turned to Christ, never stopped facing the scorn of his own nation. Every time he found himself among his people, he was imprisoned, stoned, and under threat of death. Even with all of that, the Apostle Paul continued his attempts to draw them to the salvation offered by Christ. He even came to the point of writing: "I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh" (Romans 9: 2-3). Do we understand what this means? St. Paul is saying that he would gladly suffer separation from Christ if it meant the salvation of Israel. He would give up his own salvation for theirs! This desire is repeated again in today's reading: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (verse 1).

Do we feel the same passion for our friends, relatives, family members, and associates? Can we relate to St. Paul's yearning for all to be close to Christ? Do we make an effort to get to know Christ, to love Him and believe in Him? Do we pray with warmth in our hearts for those we love to have faith in Christ take root? In short, are we concerned with salvation at all?

The Holy Apostle does not limit his focus to the people of Israel. He goes on to say that salvation is not restricted to a particular nation or people (like the Mosaic Law), but that Christ is for everyone who believes (see verse 4). Salvation is for all, no matter who that person is or where they are from (see Galatians 3:28). "*Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28) is the constant invitation of Christ. For God, "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

There is something else here, something very important: the Salvation offered by Christ is not out of reach and impossible, as some may think. St. Paul says this: "Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? (to bring Christ down to us) or Who will descend into the abyss? (to bring Christ up from the dead)" (verses 6-7). These questions have already been answered, in that it is Christ Himself who has already done everything. He "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven" (The Symbol of Faith); and also "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs, granting life" (Paschal Troparion). What is left for us to do? To believe, and know that Salvation is close at hand if we want it. In Christ, all of this is possible.

St. Paul continues: "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (verses 8-10). St. John Chrysostom, commenting on these verses, says: "In your mind and in your tongue is your salvation. There is no long journey to go on, no seas to sail over, no mountains to pass, in order to be saved."

Christ will never abandon a person who believes in Him with all their heart, accepts Him as Lord and God of their life (by living according to His will), and has the courage to confess this faith to others, even at the risk of their own life. May we also have this faith in God growing in our hearts, and to bravely declare our own love and devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.