



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 6—12 OCTOBER 2024

SUNDAY 6 OCTOBER	3RD SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 7: 11-16 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 7 OCTOBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">9.00am Service of Holy Unction10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos
THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER	★ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP (In Church Hall upstairs behind Church) ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME <i>In Church Coffee Room on side of the Church</i>
SUNDAY 13 OCTOBER	GOSPEL READING: Luke 8: 5-15 EPISTLE READING: Titus 3: 8-15

Telephone Contact Numbers

St Vasilios Church
9387 7693

Fr Athanasios
9383 4151

Fr Ephraim
0490 378 215

Website:
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.

Saint Pelagia the Virgin Martyr of Antioch - 8 October

Saint Pelagia was from Antioch and lived in the late third century. Of noble birth and great beauty, she strove to compliment these by making her soul noble and beautiful as well.

When she was fifteen, in the year 284, the governor sent soldiers to her house to arrest her for being a Christian. Surrounding the house, they were prepared to take her by force if she resisted. The young woman, however, came out and requested of the soldiers a few moments to get ready.

Pelagia knew well that once she was in the hands of the soldiers, they would likely try to violate her virginity, which she consecrated to the Lord. For this reason, Pelagia went to the roof of her house where she would pray, and there she turned towards the East, lifted her hands to the heavens, and prayed that the Lord would spare her defilement, and be taken to Heaven with soul and body unstained. Thus, preferring voluntary death rather than physical defilement and torture, she threw herself from the rooftop, and allowed her soul to take flight towards the dwelling place of the angels and saints and into the hands of God.

St. Nikolai Velimirovich: If your heart has been softened . . .

"If your heart has been softened either by repentance before God or by learning the boundless love of God towards you, do not be proud with those whose hearts are still hard. Remember how long your heart was hard and incorrigible.

Seven brothers were ill in one hospital. One recovered from his illness and got up and rushed to serve his other brothers with brotherly love, to speed their recovery. Be like this brother. Consider all men to be your brothers, and sick brothers at that. And if you come to feel that God has given you better health than others, know that it is given through mercy, so in health you may serve your frailer brothers."

Healing our Weakness Through His Strength: Homily for 3rd Sunday of Luke in the Orthodox Church

People often go to extraordinary lengths to hide their weakness from others and even from themselves. Out of insecurity and fear, we do our best to appear before our neighbours as self-reliant and strong, even when that is very far from the truth. Perhaps we think that, if we can fool others, we can even fool ourselves.

One of Saint Paul's greatest virtues was his honesty about his weakness. The risen Lord had appeared to him on the road to Damascus and enabled him to become the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul wrote so much of the New Testament and helped the Church understand the most basic truths of the faith in times of great controversy. Instead of glorying in his accomplishments, however, he boasted only in his weakness. He openly acknowledged how he had previously persecuted Christ in His Body, the Church. Indeed, Paul wrote that the Lord had mercy on him as a sign that He truly came to save sinners, of whom he was the very worst. (1 Tim. 1: 12-16) After mentioning his mystical experiences in prayer, the apostle told the Corinthians that he was given "a thorn in the flesh" to keep him humble which the Saviour would not remove. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Consequently, Paul concluded that he "will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

The strongest evidence of human weakness is surely death, the consequence of our common estrangement from God due to sin. The widow of Nain in today's gospel reading was all too familiar with death, for she had lost both her husband and her only son. When Christ saw her weeping in the funeral procession, he "had compassion on her," touched the bier on which the young man's corpse was being carried, and commanded the dead fellow to get up. Then the Lord returned him to his mother; she had her son back. That certainly got the attention of the neighbours, for "Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has visited His people!'"

Right after this miracle, we read in Luke that followers of St. John the Baptist came to ask the Lord if He was truly the long-awaited Messiah. He responded, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Luke 7:22) Notice that the Lord showed that He was the Messiah by how He healed suffering human persons in their weakness. Purely out of His gracious love, the Lord showed compassion by sharing with them His glorious strength, even to the point of raising people from the dead. Through the Cross, He Himself entered into death in order to release us all from captivity to the grave through His glorious resurrection on the third day. By sharing fully in our weakness, He has made it possible for us all to participate in the eternal blessing of His strength.

In order for us to do that, however, we must reject the lie that we are already healthy, strong, and self-sufficient. Due to our pride, we usually find it much easier to ignore or hide from our weakness than to acknowledge it. Most of us have many years of experience doing precisely that, even to the point that self-justification for just about everything we say, do, or think has become second nature. We have become experts in distracting ourselves from attending to the wounds of our own souls by blaming others when we should take responsibility. We often fill our minds and schedules with just about anything that turns our attention away from our own need for the healing mercy of Christ.

Fortunately, the Church calls every one of us to spiritual disciplines which promise to open our eyes, at least a bit, to the truth about the health of our souls. When we offer our hearts to God in prayer daily, we acknowledge that we need the Lord's presence and strength at all times. We remind ourselves that each day is a blessing from God to be lived thankfully in accordance with His gracious purposes. Our minds typically wander in prayer, which should make clear our spiritual weakness and need for greater vigilance in uniting ourselves with the Lord. By regularly focusing our minds on the words of the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner," as we open our hearts to Him, we confess our brokenness and need for healing that we cannot give ourselves. By embracing the challenges of the daily struggle to pray, we will grow in humility. It is simply impossible for us to recognize our spiritual weakness and receive the strength of our Lord without a settled habit of prayer.

The same is true of the practice of humbly confessing our sins. St. Paul did not shy away from calling himself the chief of sinners, and he publicly recounted how he had earlier persecuted the Church and was unworthy to be an apostle. (1 Cor. 15:9) In addition to acknowledging and repenting of our sins each day in prayer, we must all take advantage of the great blessing of sacramental Confession on a regular basis if we want to find healing for the weakness of souls. At least during each of the four penitential seasons of the Church year, we should name our sins to the Lord as we stand before His icon, and then kneel as we are assured of His forgiveness through the prayers of an unworthy priest who himself also goes to Confession. Taking Confession regularly and conscientiously fuels our humility by keeping our spiritual vision focused on our constant need for the Lord's mercy. As we name our sins aloud and receive assurance of forgiveness if we are truly repentant, we embrace more fully the Saviour's victory over the corrupting power of sin in our lives. All of us spiritual weaklings need this sacrament for the healing of our souls. The less we think we need it, the more we actually do.

Even when we are not in a penitential season, the Church calls us to fast from the richest and most satisfying foods on almost all Wednesdays and Fridays. From the first century, Christians have kept these days of fasting in commemoration, respectively, of the Lord's betrayal and crucifixion. Just a bit of self-denial for our taste buds and stomachs will hit most of us pretty hard and right where we live. Our difficulty in fasting will quickly reveal our weakness in controlling our self-centred desires, including our resistance to denying ourselves even in very small ways. Fasting is a teacher of humility which will help us see our true spiritual state more clearly. It will also remind us that we find our true strength, life, and fulfilment in Christ, not in satisfying our bodily appetites however we please. And by eating a simple, inexpensive diet on fast days, we will have more resources available to share with the poor and needy in whom we encounter our Lord.

The same Saviour Who raised the son of the widow of Nain and who made a great saint out of "the chief of sinners" also wants to make us shine brilliantly with His grace. The more that we offer ourselves to Him honestly in our weakness, the more that His healing strength will become effective in our lives. Let us pray, confess, and fast as we unite ourselves to Christ for the healing of our weak souls. That is the only way to enter in the joy of His resurrection.

Posted by Father Philip LeMasters