



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 1—7 DECEMBER 2024

Telephone Contact Numbers

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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 1 DECEMBER	14TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 18: 35-43 <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 2 DECEMBER <i>Elder St Porphyrios the Kafsokalyvites</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER <i>St Barbara, Great-Martyr</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos• 7.00pm <u>Divine Liturgy in ENGLISH</u>
THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER	★ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP (In Church Hall upstairs behind Church) ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME <i>In Church Coffee Room on side of the Church</i>
FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER <i>St Nicholas the Wonderworker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
SUNDAY 8 DECEMBER	GOSPEL READING: Luke 13: 10-17 EPISTLE READING: Ephesians 2: 14-22

**"You don't become holy by fighting evil. Let evil be. Look towards Christ and that will save you.
What makes a person saintly is love."
— St. Porphyrios**

St Barbara, Great Martyr

Saint Barbara was from Heliopolis of Phoenicia and lived during the reign of Maximian.

She was the daughter of a certain idolater named Dioscorus. When Barbara came of age, she was enlightened in her pure heart and secretly believed in the Holy Trinity. About this time Dioscorus began building a bath-house; before it was finished he was required to go away to attend to certain matters, and in his absence Barbara directed the workmen to build a third window in addition to the two her Father had commanded. She also inscribed the sign of the Cross with her finger upon the marble of the bath-house, leaving the saving sign cut as deeply into the marble as if it had been done with an iron too. (When the Synaxarion of Saint Barbara was written, the marble of the bath-house and the cross inscribed by Saint Barbara were still preserved, and many healings were worked there.) When Dioscorus returned, he asked why the third window had been added; Barbara began to declare to him the mystery of the Trinity. Because she refused to renounce her faith, Dioscorus tortured Barbara inhumanely, and after subjecting her to many sufferings he beheaded her with his own hands, in the year 290. Saint Barbara is commemorated on December 4th



St Nicholas the Wonderworker

St. Nicholas is a classic example of the Christian faith. He was an ordinary person who became a vehicle of God's grace, an instrument of God's love in the world. His concern was not to make himself happy but to make others happy. By virtue of faith, baptism and the gift of the Spirit, each Christian is a saint. Each of us is called, like St. Nicholas, to rise above the routine of life and to be God's ambassadors — loving, giving, helping and serving others.

Source: *The Year of Grace of the Lord*, by a Monk of the Eastern Church ¹ *A Year of the Lord*, Theodore Stylianopoulos

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” — John 20:29

Many of the Sunday Gospel readings are devoted to various miracles of healing. However, the reason we bring these miracles to the fore is not simply to show that Christ was a miracle-worker — similar miracles have been and continue to be performed by countless saints as well. The reason is rather the didactic meaning of these miracles, what these miracles can teach us about the spiritual life and about who God is.

In today's Gospel, we see a blind man who, despite the fact that he couldn't see, immediately understood that Jesus was the Son of David, the Messiah, and that he was in a position to heal his blindness.

The Pharisees had spent an entire lifetime studying the prophecies that spoke about the coming Messiah, and now they see the fulfilment of those prophecies before their very eyes, but they don't accept him. They knew everything, but understood nothing, because they were blinded by their pride. The man who was physically blind, however, understood who he was immediately.

In other words, today's Gospel is telling us that we do not perceive God through the sensory organs of the body, but the spiritual organ located in the depths of our soul.

In the Old Testament, when the Prophet Elijah ascended the mountain to meet God, “a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice” (3 Kingdoms 19:11–12), and that was the voice of God, the voice that speaks in the stillness of the heart.

That's why we refer to the sacraments of the Church as mysteries — *μυστήρια* — which means secrets.

So, how can someone enter their heart and awaken those spiritual senses with which we perceive the voice of God? The key to the heart, besides humility, is prayer. Prayer is the oxygen of the soul, and without prayer, the soul asphyxiates. St Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing”, and he means this literally. Just as we breathe constantly to stay alive, the same should be true of prayer.

And in order for the prayer to become as constant as our breathing, the Tradition of the Church recommends to us a particular method, which is the prayer of this blind man: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me”. We, of course, say the prayer in a fuller form: Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.

There are some who say that this prayer — the Jesus Prayer — is only for monks, and that lay people shouldn't bother with it. I personally completely disagree with this. The Gospel tells us that the people standing with the blind man said the same thing — “those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent”, ‘this isn't for you’ — but the Lord heard him. Of course, a layperson cannot follow the same rule of prayer as a monk or nun, but, as the Church Fathers say, just because I can't drink the entire river doesn't mean I shouldn't fill up a glass to quench my thirst. Each person engages with the Jesus Prayer according to their own ability and circumstances, but the prayer is for everyone, for every need and every moment.

The prayer consists of two basic elements: the name of Jesus and the prayer ‘have mercy on me’.

St Paul says that this name — Jesus — is “the name above every name” (Philippians 2:9) and that “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17). That's why this form of spiritual breathing takes place first and foremost through the name of the Lord Jesus.

The second element, as we said, is the ‘have mercy’, which is also the primary prayer of the laity in each church service. “Let us pray for the peace of the world”, “Lord, have mercy” (Kyrie, eleison), “For the peace of the world”, “Lord, have mercy”, “For those who travel by land, air and sea”, “Lord, have mercy”, and so on.

Why is this phrase — “Kyrie eleison” “Lord, have mercy” — used so often? In the Bible, the word ‘mercy’ (*eleos* in Greek) is used to translate two Hebrew words. The first word *hesed* means steadfast love. The second word is *reḥem*, which basically means compassion, but the literal meaning is womb; as in, a mother's womb.

In other words, the Church compares the love of God to the love of a mother for the child in her womb; and of course, the child in the womb is entirely dependent on its mother and receives from her everything it needs to survive and develop.

And so, what the Jesus Prayer does is to combine the name of the Lord Jesus with this prayer which expresses not just the love of God for us, but every spiritual and bodily need we have, as well as our complete dependence on God. The prayer also expresses our faith in the Holy Trinity — by saying “Son”, we imply the existence of a Father, and the Scriptures tell us that “no one is able to say Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). Moreover, the name “Jesus” means Saviour, while the word “Christ” means Messiah. The whole Christian faith and the whole message of the Gospel is therefore expressed in this one short prayer. Perhaps the only thing that is missing is confession, which is why we often add the words “a sinner” at the end of the prayer.

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”. We don't need anything more than this.

Let this prayer therefore be our breath, let it be our ceaseless cry which will awaken our heart from its unconsciousness, so that the Lord can say to us what he said to the blind man: “Receive your sight”. Amen.