



## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program for 8—14 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.

<b>SUNDAY 8 DECEMBER</b>	<b>10TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, Luke 13: 10-17</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>2024 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES</b> (A free voluntary program organised by the Church) <b>Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at 10.30am until Church dismissal.</b> 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.	
<b>MONDAY 9 DECEMBER</b> <i>The Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos</li></ul>
<b>THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER</b> <i>St Spyridon the Wonderworker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul> <p>★ <b>TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP</b> (In Church Hall upstairs behind Church)</p> <p><b>ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME</b> <i>In Church Coffee Room on side of the Church</i></p>
<b>SUNDAY 15 DECEMBER</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Luke 14: 16-24</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: 2 Timothy 1: 8-18</b>

### The Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos December 9

For many years, the Righteous Joachim and Anna could not conceive as Anna was barren and for this, they were treated harshly by many around them. Childlessness in that time was considered a punishment from God for their sin. This did not stop the righteous ones from praying for a child, promising to dedicate it to God. When the couple were of an advanced age, the Archangel Gabriel announced to them that they would bear a child. Truly, the Righteous Anna bore the Most Holy Theotokos on this day, the beginning of the salvation of mankind.

### Saint Spyridon The Wonderworker Commemorated December 12

Saint Spyridon was bishop of Tremithus in Cyprus. He was of peasant origin and, according to tradition, has suffered at the Diocletian prosecution. After becoming Bishop, he attended the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea and was also present at the Council of Sadica.

A large number of legends about his life were early in circulation. According to one of them, some thieves trying one night to rob him of his sheep, discovered their hands tied miraculously behind their backs. A tradition relates the incident at the Council of Nicea, by which Saint Spyridon, being theologically uninstructed, wished to prove the existence of the Holy Trinity. After praying, he took a piece of roof tile and squeezed it forcefully in his palm. Water was seen running down, the soil remaining in his palm, and air ascended upwards. In his simple language, Saint Spyridon explained the analogy to the delegated bishops. Another story relates how as a result of reciting the Creed at Nicea, a heathen philosopher was converted who had previously mocked at the Christian faith.

Saint Spyridon is considered one of the most miraculous Saints of the Greek Orthodox Church. When he died, he was buried in Tremithus, but his remains were taken to Constantinople about the end of the 7th century on account of an impending barbaric invasion, and kept there until the fall of Constantinople (1453). They were then taken to north-western Greece and finally, in 1456, to the island of Corfu in Kerkyra. Today they are found in a large church dedicated to him and attract a great number of pilgrims from all Christian lands.

On certain days, the remains are taken in procession within the city of Kerkyra and many miraculous cures are attributed to him. He is the patron Saint of the island of Corfu. His feast day in the Orthodox Church is on December 12.

### **The joy of the miracle**

The scene described in the Gospel reading for the 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke is both moving and revealing, as regards the intentions and sincerity of ordinary people and the attitude of our Lord towards them. Among the crowd, there was a woman of skin and bone. She was doubled over and in pain. She could hear the voice of Jesus, but wasn't able actually to see him.

Jesus made his way to this tormented woman. When he reached her, he said to her tenderly: 'Woman, you are freed from your infirmity. Now you're well'. Power surged through her limbs. Her body regained its strength. There was praise and gratitude in her heart. Wonder, joy and delight.

### **The hypocrisy of the ruler of the synagogue.**

But envy and spiritual wickedness cast a pall over the joyful atmosphere. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant because the Lord hadn't observed the Sabbath as a day of rest. The soul of the ruler of the synagogue was at that moment in thrall to envy, and this impelled him to act in a thoroughly odious way. He wanted to attack Christ, but didn't have the gall to openly express what was in his soul. So he thought he would use the shadow of the law to mask his unlawful conduct.

The Lord answered the challenge immediately, however, calling the reaction of the ruler of the synagogue hypocrisy and expressing his love for people: 'You hypocrites! Should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?'

As we've already said, the ruler of the synagogue cowered behind the commandments of God's law. But this isn't the only time that disagreeable people have used the Law and the Gospel in order to further their dubious ambitions and satisfy their secular desires. Egotists use the word of God to promote themselves, and people in the Church who are obstreperous misinterpret it. In fact, there are times when, in order to hide their egotism and willfulness, these people quote words from the Holy Scriptures and Fathers, which they apply circumstantially. In this way, instead of actually conforming to God's commandments people hide behind them and use them to conceal their personal antipathies. This is how heresies arise, as well as other individual theories and teachings which vex the Church of Christ. When the heart isn't pure, it can't interpret the divine word in a proper manner. Because only a clean heart can present the word in a genuine and pure way. It's only such a heart that can receive and understand it.

### **Self-knowledge, humility and love**

What we have to know is that Christ isn't interested so much in what we do, as much as in the reasons why we do it. Most often, our hostility towards and envy of other people, particularly in the name of Christ, is a pious way of establishing our own authority, and is the result of a lack of self-awareness and real love. When we have self-awareness, we acquire real humility. 'Solicitousness for others follows humility', writes Saint Isaac the Syrian. When humility isn't followed by solicitousness for others, it's mere pretence.

### **The mind of the Law**

This is why we should all pursue the cleansing of our heart and should rely on our godly Fathers, who became vessels of the Most Holy Spirit and were enlightened by the Holy Trinity. With this illumination from the Comforter, they interpreted the word of God and Holy Scripture. In this way, we will be taught that we are the ones who can prevent our brothers and sisters from destroying themselves and that we can assist in their transfiguration, by living in the spirit of the law, or, as Saint Athanasios puts it, in the mind of the law.

May the Triune God illumine us so that we can interpret his law in a proper manner and can discover the essence of our faith.

Metropolitan Agathangelos of Fanari



St. Nikolai Velimirovich: **My child, just read!**

A monk complained to St. Arsenius that while reading Holy Scripture he does not feel, neither the power of the words read nor gentleness in his heart.

To that the great saint will reply to him: "My child, just read! I heard that the sorcerers of serpents, when they cast a spell upon the serpents, the sorcerers are uttering the words, which they themselves do not understand, but the serpents hearing the spoken words sense their power and become tamed.

And so, with us, when we continually hold in our mouths the words of Holy Scripture, but even though we do not feel the power of the words, evil spirits tremble and flee for they are unable to endure the words of the Holy Spirit."

My child, just read!

The Holy Spirit Who, through inspired men, wrote these divine words, will hear, will understand and will hasten to your assistance; and the demons will understand will sense and will flee from you.

That is: He Whom you invoke for assistance will understand, and those whom you wish to drive away from yourself will understand. And both goals will be achieved.

+ St. Nikolai Velimirovich, Prologue of Ochrid