




## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program for 2—8 March 2025

<b>SUNDAY 2 MARCH</b>	<b>CHEESEFARE SUNDAY, Matthew 6: 14-21</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• 6.30pm Vespers of Forgiveness, Holy Monastery Axion Esti, Northcote</li></ul>
<b>2025 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES - BEGINS ON 2 MARCH 2025</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 3 MARCH</b> <i>Clean Monday Beginning of Lent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction</li><li>• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall</li><li>• 5.00pm Service of Great Compline with 1st section of the Great Canon</li></ul>
<b>TUESDAY 4 MARCH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 5.00pm Service of Great Compline with 2nd section of the Great Canon</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY 5 MARCH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 8.00am Service of Pre-sanctified Liturgy</li><li>• 5.00pm Service of Great Compline with 3rd section of the Great Canon</li></ul>
<b>THURSDAY 6 MARCH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 5.00pm Service of Great Compline with 4th section of the Great Canon</li><li>• 8.00—9.00pm  <b>TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP 2025 BEGINS</b> <b>ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME</b> Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment. * In downstairs classroom behind the Church building</li></ul>
<b>FRIDAY 7 MARCH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6.00pm Service of Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos — First Salutations to the Theotokos</li></ul>
<b>SATURDAY 8 MARCH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>SUNDAY 9 MARCH</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: John 1: 43-51</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 12: 1-10</b>

### 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.

### FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

In the Orthodox Church, the last Sunday before Great Lent – the day on which, at Vespers, Lent is liturgically announced and inaugurated – is called Forgiveness Sunday. On the morning of that Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ:

"If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses..." (Mark 6:14-15)

Then after Vespers – after hearing the announcement of Lent in the Great Prokeimenon: "Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted! Hear me speedily! Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!", after making our entrance into Lenten worship, with its special memories, with the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, with its prostrations – we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. And as we approach each other with words of reconciliation, the choir intones the Paschal hymns, filling the church with the anticipation of Paschal joy.

## CHEESEFARE SUNDAY, Matthew 6: 14-21

### Homily on the Sunday of Forgiveness by St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow

Today is called "Forgiveness Sunday." It received this name from the pious Orthodox Christian custom at Vespers of asking each other's forgiveness for discourtesy and disrespect. We do so, since in the forthcoming fast we will approach the sacrament of Penance and ask the Lord to forgive our sins, which forgiveness will be granted us only if we ourselves forgive each other. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt 6:14-15).

Yet it is said to be extremely difficult to forgive discourtesy and to forget disrespect. Perhaps our selfish nature finds it truly difficult to forgive disrespect, even though in the words of the Holy Fathers it is easier to forgive than to seek revenge (St. Tikhon of Zadonsk after St. John Chrysostom). Yet everything in us that is good is not accomplished easily, but with difficulty, compulsion and effort. "*The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12). For this reason we should not be discouraged at the difficulty of this pious act, but should rather seek the means to its fulfilment. The Holy Church offers many means towards this end, and of them we will dwell on the one which most corresponds to the forthcoming season of repentance.

"*Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brother.*" The source of forgiving our neighbours, of not judging them, is included in seeing (acknowledging) our sins. "Imagine," says a great pastor, who knows the heart of man, Father John of Kronstadt, "picture the multitude of your sins and imagine how tolerant of them is the Master of your life, while you are unwilling to forgive your neighbour even the smallest offense. Moan and bewail your foolishness, and that obstruction within you will vanish like smoke, you will think more clearly, your heart will grow calm, and through this you will learn goodness, as if not you yourself had heard the reproaches and indignities, but some other person entirely, or a shadow of yourself" (Lessons on a Life of Grace, p. 149). He who admits his sinfulness, who through experience knows the weakness of human nature and its inclination toward evil, will forgive his neighbour the more swiftly, dismissing transgressions and refraining from a haughty judgment of others' sins. Let us remember that even the scribes and Pharisees who brought the woman caught in adultery to Christ were forced to depart, when their conscience spoke out, accusing them of their own sins (John 8:9).

Unfortunately, brethren, we do not like to acknowledge our transgressions. It would seem natural and easy for a person to know his own self, his own soul and his shortcomings. This, however, is actually not so. We are ready to attend to anything but a deeper understanding of ourselves, an investigation of our sins. We examine various things with curiosity, we attentively study friends and strangers, but when faced with solitude without extraneous preoccupation even for a short while, we immediately become bored and attempt to seek amusement. For example, do we spend much time examining our own conscience even before confession? Perhaps a few minutes, and once a year at that. Casting a cursory glance at our soul, correcting some of its more glaring faults, we immediately cover it over with the veil of oblivion until next year, until our next uncomfortable exercise in boredom.

Yet we love to observe the sins of others. Not considering the beam in our own eye, we take notice of the mote in our brother's eye (Matt 7:3). Speaking idly to our neighbour's detriment, mocking and criticizing him are not even often considered sins but rather an innocent and amusing pastime. As if our own sins were so few! As if we had been appointed to judge others! "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy?" God (James 4:12). "Who art thou to judge another's servant? It is before his own master that he stands or falls" (Rom 14:4). "Thou hast no excuse, O man, whoever thou art who judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou dost condemn thyself. For thou who judgest dost the same things thyself" (Rom 2:1). "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; put yourselves to the test" (2 Cor 13:5). The pious ascetics provide a good example of this. They turned their minds to themselves, meditated on their own sins and avoided judging their neighbours at all costs.

One pious starets, noticing that his brother had committed a sin, sighed and said, "Woe is me! As he sinned today, so will I tomorrow." And the following is a story about another ascetic, Abba Moises. A monk committed a sin. The brethren, who had assembled to decide his case, sent for Abba Moises, but the humble starets refused to attend the council. When the rector sent for him a second time, he appeared, but in quite a striking manner. He had taken an old basket, filled it with sand and was carrying it on his back. "What does this mean?" asked the monks, catching sight of him. "See how many sins I bear behind me?" answered Moises, pointing to the heap of sand. "I don't see them, yet I have come to pass judgment upon another."

So therefore, brethren, following the example of the ascetics, upon observing others' sins, we should consider our own sins, regard our own transgressions and not judge our brother. And should we hold anything against him, let us pardon and forgive him, that our merciful Lord may forgive us also.

### Selected Quotes of the Fathers on Fasting

"And though every day a man lives may rightly be a day of repentance, yet is it in these days more becoming, more appropriate, to confess our sins, to fast, and to give alms to the poor; since in these days you may wash clean the sins of the whole year."

St. John Chrysostom - "*The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*"

"The outward man perishes through fasting and self-control, but the more he does so, the more the inward man is renewed..."

St. Gregory Palamas - "*Homilies*"