




Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 23—29 March 2025

SUNDAY 23 MARCH	3RD SUNDAY OF LENT, VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS, Mark 8: 34—9: 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 6.30pm Service of Lenten Vespers Holy Monastery Axion Esti, Northcote
2025 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 24 MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall• 5.00pm Service of Vespers for Annunciation of the Theotokos
TUESDAY 25 MARCH <i>Annunciation of the Theotokos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy• 5.00pm Service of Great Compline
WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8.00am Service of Pre-sanctified Liturgy• 5.00pm Service of Great Compline
THURSDAY 27 MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5.00pm Service of Great Compline• 8.00—9.00pm  TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP 2025 ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment. * In downstairs classroom behind the Church building
FRIDAY 28 MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6.00pm Service of Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos — Fourth Salutations to the Theotokos
SUNDAY 30 MARCH	GOSPEL READING: Mark 9: 17-31 EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 6: 13-20

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.

"While man can scarcely
keep what belongs to him
by nature, Christ gives the
grace of sonship through
the Cross."



Saint Kosmas Aitolos
+1779

THE ANNUNCIATION Luke 1: 24-38

Angelic Salutation **Rejoice!** With this angelic salutation and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the salvation of mankind and the renewal of creation were set in motion.

The Archangel turned the first page of the story of the NT with the word "Rejoice!" to show by this the joy that the NT signifies for mankind and for all things created - therefore the Annunciation is looked upon as a joyous, as well as great feast.

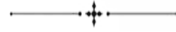
Joy of the Annunciation is about the Angel's Glad Tidings that the people had found grace with God and that very soon, through her, through this totally unknown Galilean woman, God would begin to fulfil the mystery of the world's redemption. There would be no thunder and no fear in His Presence, but He would come to her in the joy and fullness of childhood.

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Panagia - is the person through whom the Logos became flesh. The person who accepted the awesome news and responsibility that she had been chosen to bear and give birth to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

She is our inspiration and help. Gazing at her it is easy to believe in the heavenly beauty of the world and in man's heavenly transcendent calling.

Because of the immense respect and love people bestow upon her, there are countless churches dedicated to her and countless icons which have been painted in her honour. She has also been given three titles (names) by the church in her honour: Theotokos (God bearer, Mother of God a title which implies that her Son is both fully man and fully God), Aeiparthenos (Ever Virgin) and Panagia (All Holy). The first title was assigned to her during the third Ecumenical Council, the second by the fifth Ecumenical Council.



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT: AN OASIS FOR PILGRIMS

Today, on the Third Sunday of Lent, our Holy Mother calls us to quench our religious thirst, to spiritually renew our hearts, minds and bodies by offering us the opportunity to venerate the Holy Cross of Christ.

The Lenten period was given to us in order to be resurrected with Him on Resurrection Sunday. We are at the mid-point of Lent, and just in case we have become tired, discouraged and overburdened with fasting, prayers and vigils, the Church offers us the joy of the Cross as a source of power and inspiration.

The Cross is like a tree of Life in an oasis, giving inner strength to all pilgrims of God, It is this "tree of Life" that gives us the strength to transform the world. For Jesus was not Crucified in a beautiful cathedral between two candles, but on a Cross between two thieves. By carrying this "tree of Life" we then become Christ-bearers and Christ-givers, living the life of Christ.

The Cross, a stumbling-block for the Jews, was transformed by our Saviour into a ladder ascending to Heaven. The Cross, foolishness to the knowledgeable Greeks, became a source of wisdom for followers of Christ. The Cross, the sign of hatred to the world, became a symbol of eternal love. A love crucified in the person of Christ, As it is written:

"The Father is Crucifying Love, the Son is Crucified Love, and the Holy Spirit Is the invincible Love of the Cross."

But the Cross also demands that Christian men and women examine their lives honestly, especially during Lent. Does Christ truly live in us when we spend billions of dollars painting our eyes and decorating our ears while we give practically nothing towards giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf? Do we truly love our fellow man when we spend millions of dollars yearly on food advertisements but neglect to feed the hungry? Do we exemplify compassion and kindness when we spend billions on the latest fashions but refuse to clothe the naked? Do we reflect goodness when we waste our wealth in gambling while we refuse to help the needy? Do the young witness to the truth when they spend billions on smoking, alcohol and drugs in order to escape the world? When their resources could better the world? Do we show mercy when we spend billions on making the body beautiful and give infinitely less to help the crippled and the lame to walk?

When we alienate ourselves from the Cross, we alienate ourselves from God, and consequently, from each other. And is this not the greatest tragedy of our race — that men become more estranged on earth as the earth grows smaller and smaller? Apart from God we have become our own worst enemies and strangers to one another. What is the future of the world to be — A Church or a jungle of strangers?

So that the world may become the Church, each of us must cut down the tree of his own life and transform it into the image of Jesus' Cross. We should no longer be water-dipped Christians but baptized Christians. St. Gregory the Theologian writes: "It is a great thing to speak of God. but still greater to purify oneself for God."

As we carry Christ's Cross we should never forget, even in the midst of greater temptations, that we are His sheep and His alone. With our Saviour as Shepherd, we are protected, saved and resurrected.

Source: Father Byron Papanikolaou—*Lenten Reflections*, Greek Orth. Arch. Of North & South America



Sunday of the Holy Cross (Mark 8:34-38; 9:1)

The Lord said: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (8:34).

What does it mean to take up your cross and follow Christ? Our cross is our conscience. In turn, our conscience is a receptacle of God's word. If we listen to the word of God that knocks at our door, then we open the door. But if we ignore it, then Christ has no way of entering into our heart.

Our cross is a burden, just as Christ's cross was a burden for Him. But it is also our source of salvation. If we refuse to lift up our cross, then we refuse to struggle. But why do we need to struggle? The answer can be understood by looking at life without Christ. Where would we be, what would be doing? If the answer is that we would be living in sin, then we should ask ourselves, "Do I want to be living in sin?" If the answer is yes, then we can stop there and everything becomes easy. We can sit back, put our feet up and enjoy the 'good' things this world has to offer. But if we answer with a "no", then we must put some hard work into establishing a relationship with Christ.

We must make a decision about which master we wish to serve. Our hearts will tell us whether we should pick up our cross or leave it by the wayside.

The life of the Christian is not easy. How is it possible for the athlete to win the medal without breaking a sweat? The Kingdom of Heaven weighs more than all the medals in this world. But life is not a game or a race. The Christian needs no incentive. Christ asks us to love Him as He loves us, and if this is the case, then we can become like St Paul who was full of joy in his sufferings and be grateful to God for giving us a cross.