




Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 22—28 June 2025

SUNDAY 22 JUNE	2ND SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 4: 18-23 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
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 23 JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall
TUESDAY 24 JUNE <i>Nativity of St John Baptist</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7.30am Orthros and Divine Liturgy
WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos
THURSDAY 26 JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8.00—9.00pm  TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP 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
SUNDAY 29 JUNE	GOSPEL READING: Matthew 16: 13-19 EPISTLE READING: 2Corinthians 11: 21-33, 12: 1-9

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.

Nativity of St John Baptist Apolytikion

O Prophet and Forerunner of the presence of Christ, we who fervently honour you cannot worthily praise you.
For by your revered and glorious birth the barrenness of your mother and the muteness of your father
were unbound, and the incarnation of the Son of God is proclaimed to the world.



2ND SUNDAY OF MATTHEW

How to Pay Attention and Obey

Fr. Philip LeMasters

Romans 2:10-16; Matthew 4:18-23

It is much easier to think, feel, and talk than to actually do something. Jesus Christ said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." (Matt. 7:21) He also taught, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (Jn. 14:15) Too many people who call themselves Christians do so without reference to how they act in tangible, practical ways. The harsh truth is that, unless we actually obey the Saviour in daily life, we have no part in Him. He did not come to make us feel better about ourselves or to give anyone power over anyone else, but to make us perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect in fulfilment of His gracious purposes for the entire world. As the Lord told His disciples, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5: 20)

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If we want to share in His life, then we must become like the apostles who first responded faithfully to Christ's command, "Follow Me." The light yoke of the Apostles' Fast provides us an opportunity to humble ourselves before the Saviour in order to gain the spiritual strength to turn away from slavery to our self-centred desires as we embrace the great freedom that is ours in Christ Jesus. In Him, we find liberation from the nets that hold us back from making every dimension of our lives a point of entry into the joy of the heavenly kingdom.

When the disciples first heard Christ say "Follow Me," they were doing their daily work as fishermen. He called them to the fulfilment of their work in catching people for the Kingdom, in drawing them into the blessing of God's salvation. They had to leave their homes and occupations in order to follow Christ around in His ministry and learn from His teaching and example as best they could. It was not until after His resurrection that they understood who He was and were empowered by the Holy Spirit for their unique work.

Despite their imperfect understanding, they still had to obey Him, for otherwise they would not have become His disciples. Their obedience provided the context within which they would find the healing of their souls and become evangelists, martyrs, and pillars of the Church. We may wonder, however, what their example has to do with us. They lived long ago in very different circumstances than our own. As members of the Body of Christ, however, we serve the same Lord as they did. His Kingdom is present to us in the life of the Church, especially in the Divine Liturgy as we enter into the heavenly banquet. He has sent the Holy Spirit upon us as members of His own Body. We have an even greater responsibility to follow Christ than did the disciples when they were first called, for we already share in His life.

We often forget, however, that that is the case, and instead make the calling to obey the Saviour an afterthought in our lives. Instead of recognizing that He calls us to the mission of serving His Kingdom, we easily fall back on thoughts, words, and feelings and do not require us to take up our crosses and follow Him. The Apostles Fast gives us all an opportunity to reject that kind of false spirituality as we reorient our lives toward obedience to Christ. Even small acts of self-denial and faithfulness, such as abstaining from meat in the Apostles Fast and devoting a few minutes to prayer each day, remind us that our strength comes from God, not from our own will being done. It is humbling to put our own preferences for food or anything else aside in order to serve the Lord. Fasting periods are simply times for learning to say "no" to our self-centeredness so that we will find it easier to say "yes" to Christ. Serving Him requires putting obedience to His will before our own.

We may think that the disciples had it easy when Christ walked up to them and told them straightforwardly what to do. They had to leave their homes and livelihoods, but at least the Lord gave them clear instructions. Our challenge is a different one because we encounter Him in the life of His Body, the Church, and in our neighbours, as well as in our own hearts and souls. Our clouded spiritual vision makes it easy for us to misinterpret His calling to obey Him. We often are so captive to our own self-centred desires that we hear only what we want to hear. We would usually rather make God in our own image than to take up the cross of truly becoming more like Him in holiness. It is so tempting to distract ourselves from listening in the silence of prayer from the heart. It is so easy to convince ourselves that just about anything else should take precedence over keeping a rule of prayer, reading the Scriptures, and preparing conscientiously for both Confession and Communion. If we have lost our sense of urgency in obeying Christ's calling in our lives, that is probably because we have gotten in the habit of not really paying attention to Him.

Saint Paul wrote of the Gentiles "that what the Law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." Everyone created in the divine image and likeness has at least some knowledge of God. The pressing question is not how much of God's truth we have received, but how we have responded to what has been revealed to us. As St. Paul said, "it is not the hearers of the Law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law who will be justified." The application to us as Orthodox Christians is quite serious, for "to whom much is given, much will be required." (Lk 12:48) We have received the fullness of God's truth through the Church; indeed, we have received the Holy Spirit personally and been nourished with the Saviour's Body and Blood and in the Eucharist. Consequently, we must live as those who already participate in the life of God by grace from the depths of our souls. We will always have room for growth in obedience, but we must also take the steps we are presently capable of in serving Christ faithfully in whatever circumstances we face.

The Lord said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Hardly anyone is interested merely in what we say or how we feel about God. The only way to shine like a city on a hill or a lamp on a stand in a world darkened by sin is to live in a way that provides a beacon of hope for the fulfilment of the human person in God. (Matt. 5:14-15) The path to doing so is open to us all through prayer, fasting, generosity to the needy, forgiving and praying for those who have wronged us, and confessing our sins and turning away from them. In order to pursue this path, we must reject the false gods we have been in the habit of serving and remain vigilant against falling back into idolatry in any form. We must ask what kingdoms we have placed before the Kingdom of God and embrace the struggle to keep our priorities in order as we serve every neighbour as a living icon of Christ.

When our Lord's disciples first followed Him, they wanted a conventional political-military Messiah to liberate their nation from Roman occupation. Peter, Andrew, James, and John had not completed the journey to the Kingdom at that point, but they did leave behind their nets and follow Christ when He called them to do so. They were not perfect in their obedience and neither are we. The Church remains a hospital for the healing of our souls, for every one of us bears the burdens of our personal and collective brokenness. No person or society is free from the corruption that roots in the fear of death. That is why we all need the healing of the Great Physician Who came "to call not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Lk 5:32)

The Saviour calls and enables us to obey Him not only within the dimensions of our lives that we like to designate as being religious, but in every action we perform. He says to us all, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." As we continue the Apostles Fast, let us humble ourselves in order to receive the healing and strength we need to serve Christ faithfully through the sacramental and ascetical life of His Body, the Church. That is the only way for us to follow in the way of the apostles and of all the saints to a kingdom that is not of this world.

