



## Parish Information Bulletin

### 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.

### Program for 13—19 July 2025

<b>SUNDAY 13 JULY</b>	<b>FATHERS OF THE 4TH COUNCIL, Matthew 5: 14-19</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>2025 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 14 JULY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>9.00am</b> Service of Holy Unction</li><li>• <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY 16 JULY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos</li></ul>
<b>THURSDAY 17 JULY</b> <i>St Marina, Great-Martyr</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>SUNDAY 20 JULY</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Matthew 9: 1-8</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: James 5: 10-20</b>

Do not undertake to explain the Gospels or the other books of Holy Scripture yourself. The Scriptures were not expressed arbitrarily by the prophets and apostles, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. How mindless then is it to explain them arbitrarily? The Holy Spirit, having expressed the Word of God through the prophets and apostles, explained it through the Holy Fathers. Both the Word of God and its explanation are a gift of the Holy Spirit. The holy Orthodox Church and its true children accept only this patristic interpretation!

- St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On Reading the Gospel*



"The Lord says to His disciples, 'Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt 5:16). He does not say this to urge them to show off, but to urge them to organise their lives as is pleasing to God. Just as light effortlessly attracts people's gaze, so a way of life pleasing to God draws their minds along with their eyes. We do not praise the air which shares in the brilliance of the sunlight, but the sun which is the source of this brilliance and bestows it on us. Even if we do praise the air for its brightness, we praise the sun much more. So it is when someone makes the brilliance of the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2) visible through his virtuous deeds. As soon as anyone looks at him, they are immediately led towards the glory of the Father in heaven of Christ, the Sun of righteousness."

- St Gregory Palamas

## Homily for the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in the Orthodox Church

*Titus 3:8-15; Matthew 5:14-19*

We live in a time when many people water down and distort the Christian faith however it pleases them. Some do so in support of their favourite political or cultural agendas, while others simply want a little spirituality to help them find greater peace of mind or success in their daily lives, which do not differ at all from those of people who do not identify themselves as Christians. Regardless of their church membership, or lack thereof, those who do so neither understand nor respond to the true calling of the Saviour, Who came to make us nothing less than “partakers of the divine nature.” Were Jesus Christ merely a human teacher of a moral code or an example of a virtuous life, then perhaps it would make sense to take from Him only that which helps us get whatever we want in this world and to disregard the rest. Because He is the God-Man, however, the point is not for us to make Him in our own image but instead to become more like Him as His living icons, radiant with grace as “the light of the world.”

The Saviour is fully God and fully human: one Person with two natures, as the 630 holy and God-bearing fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon declared in the year 451. The point is not simply a lesson in Church history, but the proclamation of the Gospel, for Jesus Christ must be both fully God and fully human in order to make us “partakers of the divine nature” who shine with His holy light. He must truly be one of us in order to restore and fulfil us in the image and likeness of God such that we may become “the light of the world.”

If we surrender to the popular distortions of Christian faith in our culture, we will set our sights so low to the point that we fit right in with the darkness that is all around us. We will then think that we are faithful Christians even as we hate our enemies, place our ultimate allegiance to the false gods of this world, and otherwise devote ourselves to the service of pride, power, and pleasure. Our Christian witness will then not be worthy of the name, and we will do more harm than good both to our neighbours and to our own souls. In today's gospel reading, the Lord warns against misinterpreting His ministry as though He came to “to abolish the law and the prophets.” That would have meant that He did not care how His followers lived and did not call them to a particular way of life that required constant repentance.

Actually, the Saviour made it very clear by saying: “I have come not to abolish them [i.e., the law and the prophets], but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” He did not diminish or reduce the commandments, but intensified them by going literally to the heart of the matter. No longer was it enough to refrain from murdering someone with our hands; now our hearts must be purified of the anger that leads to insult and deadly violence. No longer was it enough to stop short of having intercourse with someone other than one's own spouse; now our hearts must be healed of desire for intimacy outside the uniquely blessed union of husband and wife. No longer did it suffice to limit our desire for revenge to “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”; now we must turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, and love even our enemies as God loves us.

Christ has fulfilled the prophecy spoken by Jeremiah: “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (Jer. 31:3) By the power of the Holy Spirit, so abundantly poured out at Pentecost, the Saviour heals and strengthens us so that we may become radiant with the light of the gracious divine energies shining from our hearts like a city on a hill or a lamp on a stand such that people “may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven.” That is simply not possible apart from our personal participation in the Lord's restoration and fulfilment of the human person as a living icon of God. But instead of humbly and mindfully offering ourselves to Him for the healing of our passions every day, we too often want a religion that we can mould to serve whatever we find most appealing. That path leads not to brilliant light, but only to the spiritual darkness of worshipping ourselves and our vain imaginations as we become ever more complacent with our corruption. Instead of struggling to take up our crosses, we will then become so spiritually degraded that we will congratulate ourselves for our presumed virtues and think that we are somehow justified in condemning anyone who questions or resists our will. The darker our spiritual vision becomes, the less able we will become to see our neighbours as living icons of Christ and to treat them accordingly.

In today's culture, there are many secular and religious versions of this temptation. It is an equal opportunity temptation for people of every political stripe, ethnic identity, social class, or other affiliation. No matter what form it takes, it cannot heal the soul and make us radiant with the light of Christ. We must be very careful not to allow it to corrupt our pursuit of the Christian life, for we cannot manipulate the God-Man, as proclaimed by the Holy Fathers of Chalcedon, Who alone can make us brilliant with heavenly glory. If we attempt to do so, we will never become transparent to the uncreated light, but instead will become, as St. Paul wrote, “self-condemned” by our devotion to “foolish disputes...and contentions, and controversies ... [that] are unprofitable and vain.”

Instead, let us follow the Apostle's advice to “learn how to preside in honourable occupations, so as to help in cases of urgent need...[and] not be unfruitful.” That is simply a way of saying that we must devote ourselves to the basic spiritual disciplines of the Christian life as we turn away from anything that would distract us from our fundamental vocation to share personally in the healing and restoration brought to the world by the God-Man Jesus Christ. By His grace, we may become the light of the world, a beacon drawing others into the brilliant new day of the Kingdom of God. In order to do so, we must embrace the daily struggle: to pray to God from our hearts; to fast in a way appropriate to our spiritual and physical health and life circumstances; to give generously to the needy and in support of the Church's ministries without drawing attention to ourselves; to forgive and pray for those who wrong us; to refuse to praise ourselves or to condemn anyone else; and to confess and repent of our sins on a regular basis. Whenever we start to think that following this path has become easy or that we have somehow mastered it, we must intensify our efforts in order not to become content with watering down the demands of obedience to our Lord, Who calls us to nothing less than acquiring the purity of heart necessary to see God. That high calling should roust us out of our spiritual delusions pretty quickly, for who can claim to have mastered it?

The next time that we catch ourselves watering down what it means to share in the life of the God-Man in any way, we should remember this story from the Desert Fathers:

*Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, “Abba as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?” Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, “If you will, you can become all flame.”[1]*

- Fr. Philip LeMasters