





## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program for 30 November—6 December 2025

<b>SUNDAY 30 NOVEMBER</b> <i>Apostle Andrew the First-Called</i>	<b>13th SUNDAY OF LUKE, John 1: 35-52</b> <b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy
<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 1 DECEMBER</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>TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER</b> <i>Elder St Porphyrios the Kafsokalyvites</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY 3 DECEMBER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos</li></ul>
<b>THURSDAY 4 DECEMBER</b> <i>St Barbara, Great-Martyr</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li><b>8.00—9.00pm</b>  <b>TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP</b> <b>ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME</b> Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment. <b>* Downstairs in the building behind the Church</b>  <b>Find St Vasilios Greek Orthodox Parish Brunswick on Facebook and Instagram</b> <b>@stvasiliosgreekorthodoxchurch</b></li></ul>
<b>SATURDAY 6 DECEMBER</b> <i>St Nicholas the Wonderworker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>SUNDAY 7 DECEMBER</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Luke 13: 10-17</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: Ephesians 5: 8-19</b>

### 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.

*"One can become a saint anywhere. At your work, whatever it may be, you can become holy through meekness, patience, and love. Every day, make a new beginning, with enthusiasm, love, prayer and silence."*

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*Elder St Porphyrios the Kafsokalyvites*

### Apostle Andrew, the Holy and All-Praised First-Called - Kontakion

Let us praise Andrew, the herald of God, the namesake of courage, the first-called of the Saviour's disciples and the brother of Peter.

As he once called to his brother, he now cries out to us:

"Come, for we have found the One whom the world desires!"

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### St Barbara, Great-Martyr - Apolytikion

Let us praise the most honourable Barbara. She thwarted the enemy's power, and through the might and strength of the Cross, she was made free in her flight to God.

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### St Nicholas the Wonderworker - Apolytikion

The truth of things hath revealed thee to thy flock as a rule of faith, an icon of meekness, and a teacher of temperance; for this cause, thou hast achieved the heights by humility, riches by poverty.  
O Father and Hierarch Nicholas, intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved.

## "Follow Me" Applies to Us All

In some ways, we may envy Peter, Andrew, James, and John for the clarity of their call. On the day that Jesus Christ called them to leave everything behind and follow Him, there was no question what He wanted them to do. The message was clear and they did as they were told.

Of course, that was only the beginning of their ministry as disciples and apostles. As we know from reading the rest of the gospels, these men did not have a clear understanding of who Christ really was until after His resurrection. Nothing in their background had prepared them for this unusual kind of Messiah or for the great sacrifices that following Him would require. But on the day that the Lord called His first disciples, He did not require perfect understanding. He asked only that they leave behind the life that they had known and take the first steps in following Him.

That was not a small thing, of course. Imagine how hard it would be if Christ made very clear to you that He wanted you to give up the only occupation you had ever known, leave your family behind, and literally follow Him as He went around teaching, preaching, and healing the sick. On that particular day, despite the enormity of this calling and their less than full understanding of it, these men did as they were told and became "fishers of men" for the Kingdom of God. They were clearly chosen to be Christ's disciples, but they certainly did not have it easy in any way for the rest of their lives.

It is a blessing and a challenge to have a strong and clear sense of what God wants you to do in life. How many holy people—from the very first Christians until this very day—die as martyrs or suffer abuse and persecution for their faithfulness to Christ? To take even small steps toward a holy life requires struggle, persistence, and a willingness to endure tension within our own souls and usually with other people. To lead a righteous life requires loving God with every ounce of our being and our neighbours as ourselves. Try to do that seriously and you will find yourself fighting many battles, especially in your own soul.

St. Paul was a Jewish convert to Christianity who knew that God had called the Hebrews for a unique role in the salvation of the world. The Jews certainly had an advantage over the Gentiles because of all that God had revealed to them through Moses and the prophets. But St. Paul also knew that God shows no partiality. Hearing the Law without obeying it was of no benefit at all, even as Christ's disciples would have gained nothing by ignoring Christ's call to follow Him. What matters is actually doing what God requires of us.

St. Paul knew that God had not abandoned the Gentiles, for He gave everyone a conscience, a knowledge of right and wrong engraved in our hearts; that is an important part of what it means to be a human being in God's image and likeness. So whether Jew or Gentile, whether according to the Law of Moses or the dictates of conscience, St. Paul teaches that God holds us all accountable to the truth that we have received. The question for every human being, then, is whether we obey the Lord according to what we know of His purposes for us.

He was under no illusion that the Jews had perfectly obeyed the Law or that the Gentiles had lived fully in accordance with conscience. St. Paul taught that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No one is in the position to boast of a privileged status before the Lord or to judge another, for both Jew and Gentile (namely, all human beings) stand in need of grace and mercy to the depths of our souls. Everyone is in need of a Saviour Who conquers sin and death and brings us into the eternal life of God.

That was certainly true our Lord's disciples, who failed with some frequency to obey or even understand what Christ expected of them. They largely abandoned Him at His arrest and crucifixion, and it was not until He appeared to them after His resurrection and gave them a measure of the Holy Spirit that their eyes were truly opened. It was not until the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that they boldly and effectively became "fishers of men" whose preaching and miracle-working ministry brought multitudes into the life of Christ. As a consequence of their apostolic ministry, they took up their crosses in suffering persecution, hardships of all kinds, and even death as martyrs. The Lord did not call them to an easy life of special privilege, but to an extremely demanding one of sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom.

At the end of the day, He does the same with us all. Of course, the details will be different. We are not fishermen in first-century Palestine or the very pillars of the Church in the sense that they were. St. Paul surely did not have us in mind when he wrote to the Romans about Jews and Gentiles. It is possible to get so caught up in the particular callings and circumstances of others such that we miss the larger point. To be perfectly clear, the larger point is that we are all fully responsible for hearing and responding to God's calling in our lives, no matter how imperfectly we understand it or how difficult it is to obey.

In many ways, we have much less of an excuse than Christ's first disciples, for we have the benefit of their example and of so many generations of faithful people who have gone before us in following Jesus Christ. As Orthodox Christians, we have received the fullness of God's revelation in the ongoing life of the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit. But instead of patting ourselves on the back and simply taking pride in these great blessings, we must humbly accept the great responsibility that they give us. Like the Jews of old, we must remember that it is no great thing to be a recipient of God's requirements if we do not actually do what He requires. Like the Gentiles mentioned by St. Paul, we must remember that it is no accomplishment to have a conscience that leads us in the right direction if we do not actually follow it. And our participation in the Church will be of no benefit to us if we ourselves do not become living witnesses of our Saviour's victory over sin and death in our daily lives.

In this season of the Apostles Fast, we want to become more like those blessed men who left everything behind in response to the Saviour's call, even though they often fell short. Their understanding was imperfect and the same was true of their actions on many occasions. But the Lord did not abandon or reject them, even when they abandoned Him. He is merciful and calls us all to accept His mercy when we realize that we have not been doers of His will and have disregarded His calling. Like the apostles, we do not yet have perfect faith and obedience; but just like them, we are responsible to respond to the calling we have received as best we can. To do so will never be easy or without sacrifice; we will often stumble along the path of discipleship. But if we continue the journey with humble repentance, we will grow each step of the way in hearing Christ's calling more clearly and in gaining the strength to obey Him more fully.

As hard as it is to believe, Jesus Christ calls each of us with the urgency that He called those first disciples and apostles. We are every bit as responsible for obeying Him as they were, indeed even more responsible because we have the benefit of their example. They had to wait three years for Christ's resurrection and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, while we do not. Far more than the Jews of the Old Testament or the ancient Gentiles, God has opened the eyes of our souls to know what He requires of us. He has given us a great calling to share personally in His eternal and holy life. There is no question about that. The only question is how we will respond to the One Who says to each and every one of us: "Follow Me."

- Fr Philip LeMasters <https://easternchristianinsights.blogspot>.