



## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program for 7—13 April 2024

<p><b>SUNDAY 7 APRIL</b></p>	<p><b>3RD SUNDAY OF LENT, Veneration of the Holy Cross,</b> Mark 8: 34-38; 9 :1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li> <li>• <b>6.30pm</b> Service of Lenten Vespers Holy Monastery Axion Esti, Northcote</li> </ul>
<p><b>2024 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.</p>	
<p><b>MONDAY 8 APRIL</b></p>	<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> <li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Service of Great Compline</li> </ul>
<p><b>TUESDAY 9 APRIL</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Service of Great Compline</li> </ul>
<p><b>WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>8.00am</b> Service of Pre-sanctified Liturgy</li> <li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Service of Great Compline</li> </ul>
<p><b>THURSDAY 11 APRIL</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Service of Great Compline</li> <li>• <b>8.00—9.00pm</b> ➔ <b>TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP 2024</b> <b>ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME</b> Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends, enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment. * In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church</li> </ul>
<p><b>FRIDAY 12 APRIL</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>6.00pm</b> Service of Akathist Hymn to The Theotokos — Fourth Salutations to the Theotokos</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUNDAY 14 APRIL</b></p>	<p><b>GOSPEL READING: Mark 9 :17-31</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 6 :13-20</b></p>

### 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.

"Glory, O Lord, to the power of Thy Cross, which never fails!  
When the enemy oppresses me with a sinful thought or feeling,  
and I, lacking freedom in my heart, make the sign of the Cross several times with faith,  
suddenly my sin falls away from me, the compulsion vanishes, and I find myself free...  
For the faithful the Cross is a mighty power which delivers from all evils,  
from the malice of the invisible foe."

*St. John of Kronstadt*

What shall we offer you O Christ?  
For You have given us Your precious Cross to venerate,  
on which Your holy Blood was shed,  
to which Your flesh was fixed by nails.  
With love we kiss it and give thanks to You.

Orthros—Sunday of the Holy Cross

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### **Third Sunday Of Lent: Veneration Of The Precious Cross, Mark 8: 34-38; 9 :1**

In today's gospel lection, taken from Mark 8:34, Jesus says: "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*" According to accepted English dictionaries, "deny" means to refuse, reject, repudiate and/or to declare something untrue. If we limit ourselves to these definitions, we do an injustice to the deeper meaning of Christian self-denial. For a clearer picture of what Jesus means, we must return to the original Greek text. The Greek is "aparnisastho" and it has the meaning of renunciation and absolute rejection of whatever is incongruous with Jesus' planned salvation for us.

There are those of us who have a narrow and limited understanding of self-denial. We pick and choose at random what we will give up and what we will do in the name of Christianity. We proceed to label them "Our little crosses we must bear." "I'll give up movies and/or TV during lent." Thus we conclude with a list of trivialities that have no bearing on the "self-denial" Jesus speaks about in our gospel lesson for today. Christ-like self-denial goes much deeper. It penetrates the facade which hides our hidden sins, our shortcomings and our faults.

Utter denial does not mean depriving ourselves of the necessities of life, nor does it mean we must become paupers and live in rags. Neither does it mean we must lose our individuality, personality and identity. When Jesus speaks of total and utter denial of self, He means we must subordinate our clamouring ego that prohibits us from being the Children of God we were intended to be. Good intentions are not enough. This is why Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

"Take up your cross and follow me" means to get started on our journey to salvation. If the road we are on does not have God's Eternal Kingdom as its destination, then we had better make a U-turn and find the right one!

"Taking up our cross and following Jesus" means trying harder when those moments of calamity, tragedy, sorrow and loss and grief beset us. It means bringing under control our uncontrollable anger, our undue insensitivity, our impatience and impetuosity. It means subduing our temperament and disposition so that we can master them rather than their mastering us.

There is another reason this gospel passage is read at the Divine Liturgy of the Third Sunday of Lent. The Synaxarion, that portion of the Orthros service book which both announces and describes the observed Feast Day for today, says the following:

"On this the Third Sunday of Great Lent, we observe the Veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross and for this reason: Inasmuch as in the forty days of fasting we in a way crucify ourselves and become bitter, despondent and failing, the Life-giving Cross is presented to us for spiritual refreshment and assurance, for remembrance of our Lord's Passion and for comfort. Like those who are following a long and tedious path are tired, see a beautiful tree with many leaves, they would sit in its shade and rest for a while and then, as if rejuvenated, they will continue their journey. Likewise today, in the time of fasting and difficult journey and effort, the Life-giving Cross was planted in its midst by the Holy Fathers of the Church to give rest and spiritual refreshment, to make us light and courageous for the remaining task.

Christ comforts us who are, as it were, in a desert until He will lead us up to the spiritual Jerusalem by His Resurrection. Just as the Precious Cross, which is also called the Tree of Life, was planted in the middle of Paradise, so our Holy Fathers planted the Cross in the middle of holy and Great Lent, as a sacred reminder of both Adam's bliss and how he was deprived of it. Remembering also that by partaking of this Tree of Life, the Precious and Life-giving Cross, we no longer die but are kept alive."

St. John Chrysostom, a fourth century Patriarch of Constantinople describes the Cross this way: "The Cross is the proof of the love of God. The Cross is the unshaken wall, the unconquered weapon, the Kingdom of virtue. The Cross has torn asunder our mortgage and rendered useless the prison of death. The Cross has opened Paradise, it has admitted the thief and has guided the human race from impending disaster to the Kingdom of God."

Jesus extends His invitation to us once again to "deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him." Our Church gives us this Third Sunday of Lent--Mid-point to Golgotha--to pause with Jesus, to refresh ourselves spiritually, to assess our Lenten journey and to continue with greater determination. But the initiative is still ours. There is no way into spring but that we endure the rigors of winter. There is no way we can arrive to Easter Sunday if we do not live the agonies of all our Good Fridays. There is no way we can achieve eternal life with God unless we deny ourselves utterly and totally in Christ. This we do when we endure and sustain our own personal crosses and follow Him.

George Nicozisin

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