

# PARISH OF THE HOLY TRINITY



## COMMUNITY BULLETIN

18 FEBRUARY 2023

No. 69

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### *Monthly News & Announcements*

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#### **Prayers & Services**

- ❖ Please pray for the newly departed *Konstantinos, Gunnar, Priest Stephen, Metropolitan John, Aileen and Priest John*, and the sick *Paul, Richard and Monica*.
  - ❖ Saints' days in [Greek](#) and [English](#)
  - ❖ Bilingual texts and music for [all services by date](#)
  - ❖ Archdiocesan Sunday [Bulletins](#) and [Services](#) (Holy Wisdom Cathedral, London)
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#### **Events & Announcements**

There will be additional services during Lent of course, and these have been added to the [online calendar](#). A paper schedule will be available shortly.

Our Community **Lenten appeal** this year is as usual for an educational charity. The Joint Parish Council has chosen the [Unicef appeal for Ethiopia](#) which includes the provision of teachers and school facilities for displaced children.

*Week 1 of Lent:*

**Sunday 26 February** at 6pm, Forgiveness Vespers (see below)

**Monday-Thursday evenings** at 6pm, Compline & Canon of St Andrew of Crete

**Wednesday 1 March** at 9am, Pre-sanctified Liturgy

**Friday 3 March** at 6.15pm, Compline & Akathist



## From Fr Ian

Dear Friends,

With the Sunday of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee two weeks ago we entered on the most concentrated spiritual time of the year. In two weeks' time we shall begin the Great Fast leading us up to Easter, and the Lord's Resurrection. We then continue our journey from Easter to Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, and finally reach the Sunday of All Saints. If we include in this season the preparation for Lent and the celebrations following All Saints, when we specifically commemorate the saints who have shone forth in our various homelands, we can see that this sacred pilgrimage occupies fully one third of the year, and so it is surely worth asking ourselves how we are going to observe it so that we may profit spiritually.

In the Western Christian tradition there is the practice of 'giving up something for Lent.' For many people this means something like 'no chocolate until Easter.' There is nothing wrong with this, but it can remain only an external discipline. Our Church, in the hymns and prayers of the Lenten season, calls us to do more than this — to discipline ourselves internally, too. How would it be if we were to give up gossip, criticism or harsh speech for Lent, not to take them up again at Easter, but to starve them so that they no longer had roots in our life? How would it be if we were to give up some of our 'spare' time to pay attention to the needs of those around us? How would it be if we were to give up our constant busyness to spend some time with God, listening to what he had to say to us and putting it into practice? Could this form a launching point for a more profitable journey from Easter to Pentecost?

I wish all of you God's blessing in the journey.

With my love to you all,

Fr Ian

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### Forgiveness Sunday

On the morning of Forgiveness Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses..." (Mark 6:14-15). Then, after Vespers [...] we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. And as we approach each other with words of reconciliation, the choir intones the Paschal hymns, filling the church with the anticipation of Paschal joy. [...] Now, forgiveness stands at the very centre of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, Whom He sends to us, so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Indeed, Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a return to it, a growth in it, that we seek in Great Lent, in fasting and prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for the Lenten season.

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[Continued]

One may ask, however: Why should I perform this rite when I have no ‘enemies’? Why should I ask forgiveness from people who have done nothing to me, and whom I hardly know? To ask these questions is to misunderstand the Orthodox teaching concerning forgiveness. It is true, that open enmity, personal hatred, real animosity may be absent from our life, though if we experience them, it may be easier for us to repent, for these feelings openly contradict Divine commandments. But, the Church reveals to us that there are much subtler ways of offending Divine Love. These are indifference, selfishness, lack of interest in other people, of any real concern for them — in short, that wall which we usually erect around ourselves, thinking that by being ‘polite’ and ‘friendly’ we fulfil God’s commandments. The rite of forgiveness is so important precisely because it makes us realise — be it only for one minute — that our entire relationship to other men is wrong, makes us experience that encounter of one child of God with another, of one person created by God with another, makes us feel that mutual ‘recognition’ which is so terribly lacking in our cold and dehumanized world.

On that unique evening, listening to the joyful Paschal hymns, we are called to make a spiritual discovery: to taste of another mode of life and relationship with people, of life whose essence is love. We can discover that always and everywhere Christ, the Divine Love Himself, stands in the midst of us, transforming our mutual alienation into brotherhood. As I advance towards the other, as the other comes to me — we begin to realize that it is Christ Who brings us together by His love for both of us. And because we make this discovery — and because this discovery is that of the Kingdom of God itself: the Kingdom of Peace and Love, of reconciliation with God and, in Him, with all that exists — we hear the hymns of that Feast, which once a year, ‘opens to us the doors of Paradise.’ We know why we shall fast and pray, what we shall seek during the long Lenten pilgrimage. Forgiveness Sunday: the day on which we acquire the power to make our fasting — true fasting; our effort — true effort; our reconciliation with God — true reconciliation.

*[Adapted from Fr Alexander Schmemmann]*



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**Please remember  
Holy Trinity Parish  
in your prayers**

## Justice and Philanthropy

This week's Sunday is the third of the [pre-Paschal] liturgical period known as the Triodion. It is called the Sunday of Apokries or Carnival, because of the limited fast which begins in the course of the following week. We abstain from meat (από + κρέας, hence Απόκριες), as recommended in the liturgical handbooks. The Church is beginning to prepare and condition us for fasting, so that we will be able to embark with tranquillity upon the spiritual season of Lent, the sacred training-ground of the virtues.

This Sunday is dedicated to the certain expectation of Judgement. In today's Gospel passage (Matt. 25: 31-46), the evangelist Matthew reports to us the very words of Christ Himself about the Day of Judgement. He will come, he tells us, in all His glory, accompanied by the angels, and will separate the righteous from sinners, as shepherds once separated their mixed flocks into sheep and goats. The Gospel warns and prepares us for a tribunal of worldwide proportions.

It is clear from our first hearing this passage that Christ is laying special emphasis on the themes of Justice and Philanthropy, meaning generosity towards our neighbours. Let us linger on these two principles and examine them. A natural question to ask is, does justice even exist? If it does, why do so many crimes go unpunished? Why are there so many divorces of which children are the victims? Why do hard-hearted and inhumane people batten upon the poor, enriching themselves at the expense of the community? Many similar 'why' questions go unanswered. Human justice is shown up as powerless to correct even small and insignificant misdemeanours, while huge crimes appear to go unpunished. The question is, what will happen next? Will these malefactors get off scot-free for ever and ever? Our conscience cries out to us that a day must surely come when criminals and transgressors will be arrested and caught in the toils of unbiased justice. It is God who will dispense this justice; He will punish crime, and reward virtue.

Christ goes on to speak of philanthropy. But what sort of philanthropy, exactly? True philanthropy, love of mankind, presupposes direct personal contact with our fellows, taking an interest in them, cultivating bonds of affection expressed through ministering to our neighbours and supplying their needs. It is not enough for us to be merely positively inclined towards helping others, nor for the concept of philanthropy to be used as the answer to any request for help. Such a stance is, if nothing worse, both condescending and egotistical. Rather, we should actively seek out our neighbour, the least among us, the one who escapes our notice, and who will consequently never knock on our door to ask for help. Let us follow the example of Christ Himself, who came to seek out and save the lost, moved by deep concern and true philanthropy. We should not rest cushioned within our personal comfort zone, but reach out, moved by genuine concern, to those of our brothers and sisters who will always have need of us. That, in essence, is the kind of philanthropy required of us by Christ through today's passage, the impulse born of love and not pity, the philanthropy that shares the pain of our fellows and which offers help from our abundance or even our restricted means, without drum-rolling and with no expectation of return.

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In a period when our community has to a great extent lost its internal cohesion, and when indifference to our neighbour is tending to become the norm, the message of today's Gospel reading is both timely and eternal. Let us have our defence ready for when we face our Lord Jesus Christ, and may God, through the intercessions of the Saints, grant us His mercy. Let none of us hear Jesus say 'Depart from me into the eternal fire!' Instead, may we all hear His joyful invitation, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

**[Translations of the Archdiocesan bulletin offered by Rosemary B-M, [Source](#).]**

