

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA  
SECOND ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Bi-Monthly Magazine  
July - August, 2007  
14 th Issue

# Saint Nestor

CENTRAL YOUTH COMMITTEE MAGAZINE

*"I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11: 25)*

## The Beheading of the

Baptist John: 29th August



Venerable Head of the Glorious

Prophet, Forerunner and

*"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8: 12)*

# 7th Sunday after Pentecost: Two blind men and the demoniac (Matthew 9:27-35)

In the section of St Matthew's Gospel appointed to be read on the 7th Sunday after Pentecost (Section 33, or 9:27-35), we find our Lord healing two blind men and a dumb man (a mute) possessed with a devil. Neither St Luke nor St Mark relates the first of these miracles, but St Luke includes the second (11:14-15).

The diseases—blindness and muteness—were physical. The Evangelist does not say what caused the blind men's blindness, the other's inability to speak is clearly attributed to demonic possession.

Physical blindness in the Scriptures often points to a far more serious disease: spiritual blindness. As in the case of other cures, the Lord in one way or another prepared the afflicted for their healing by a kind of spiritual purification. Remember, for example, His first words to the man sick of the palsy: "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9:2). In the present encounter, His question to the blind men, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" serves as a test, or to bring out the increase of their faith. "Yes, Lord," they answer, indicating that the faith they already had in Him, no doubt because they had heard of Him and His wondrous works, has become more sure. While they at first addressed Him as "Son of David," they now are able to call Him "Lord." "They call Him no more Son of David, but soar higher, and acknowledge His dominion" (St John Chrysostom, *On the Gospel According to St Matthew*, Homily 32, no. 1).

One remarkable detail is that the Lord does not heal them in the presence of the multitude. Instead He leads them into a house to heal them in relative privacy and establish them in that higher level of faith signified by the name "Lord." The point is that He deliberately avoids the praise that the people surely would give Him if He performed the miracle before them. Further, His injunction to them "after their eyes were opened"—"He straightly charged them, See that no man know it"—makes it evident that He sought no glory for what He had done. "He healed within the house and in private, to show us how to avoid vainglory. In everything He did He taught humility" (Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St Matthew*, ch. 9, vv. 29-30).

The Evangelist continued: "But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country" (v. 31). Was this behaviour blatant disobedience and disregard for the strict command of the One whom they had just acknowledged as Lord? Many modern commentators say yes, but the Fathers of the Church, who had a deeper sense of the Scriptures, a biblical mind, say no. The healed blind men must have understood that the Lord had implied that they could not boast of their healing, as if they were worthy, but were obliged to proclaim God's glory manifest

in the miracle. After all, He gave a specific command on another occasion: "Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you and has had compassion on you" (Mark 5:19; Luke 8:39). St John Chrysostom says they became "preachers and evangelists" (*On the Gospel According to St Matthew*, Homily 32).

To return to the blind men's initial plea: we find that "they followed Him, crying and saying, Son of David, have mercy on us". They had no doubt heard of Him. After the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead—the incident that immediately precedes the present miracle in St Matthew's Gospel—"the fame hereof went abroad into all the land." Their spiritual blindness was beginning to be healed: they undoubtedly were among those who knew that the Messiah, the Son or descendant of David, was to come. They must have thought that surely the man who did the things that He did must be that Messiah. Even, perhaps, without knowing why, they asked Him for something that God alone can offer: "have mercy on us". Were they asking to be cured of their blindness, or were they already sufficiently illumined to ask for the greater gift, the mercy of God? In any event, two simple words—"Yes, Lord"—show that their faith that He had power to heal had been performed. "And not merely in works, but also in faith, has God preserved the will of man free and under his own control, saying, 'According to your faith be it unto you. And again, 'All things are possible to him that believes' (Mark 9:23); and, 'Go your way; and as you have believed, so it be done to you' (Matthew 8:13). Now all such expressions demonstrate that man is in his own power with respect to faith" (St Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 4, ch. 37, no. 5).

Spiritual blindness can be complete or partial. In the heart and mind, one can fail altogether to see God, have no place for Him, and seek the meaning of existence elsewhere. What is perhaps even more common, one can have a tentative belief, somehow believing yet having doubts. We remember the words of the father who asked the Lord to heal his son: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). But, when one comes into the presence of Christ, he may reject Him, as many did during our Lord's lifetime, or he may undergo a total conversion. In the same way, a direct experience of the Lord's presence can transform what has been conditional and incomplete into complete faith and trust. Herein we have a deeply personal application of the miracle of the healing of the two blind men.

Now we read in Matthew 9:32, "As they went out, behold they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil".

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# 7th Sunday after Pentecost: Two Blind Men and the Demoniac (Matthew 9:27-35)

(from page 2)

This man's affliction is not a natural one; it is neither congenital nor the result of some other disease or accident. Of this we can be sure because the Evangelist relates the muteness to demonic possession. And, as soon as the devil is cast out, the man begins to speak. (See Blessed Theophylact, *ibid.*, vv. 32-33).



The Lord's fame had spread throughout the land because of His raising Jairus' daughter from the dead (9:26). The number of people who followed Him had increased greatly, and people from among the multitude brought to Him the sick and afflicted. This was the case with the dumb man possessed with a devil. He was brought, and since the devil had bound his tongue, he was unable to call on the Lord. Unlike the blind men, he was unable to ask for healing or mercy. (See St John Chrysostom, *ibid.*, no. 2)

What Jesus said or did to cast out the devil is not recorded. Perhaps He said nothing; perhaps He made no gesture. Perhaps He simply willed the cleansing and it was so. There is no indication that the dumb man was anything but passive, but, to be sure, the Lord knew his heart and was moved with compassion because of his affliction. It is also possible that Christ was responding to the intercessory action of those who brought the man to Him. We have seen that He was moved to heal on another occasion "when He saw their faith". We also learn that as soon as the devil was cast out, the man began to speak. None of the Evangelists gives us any notion of what he said.

The crowd that followed the Lord marveled at this sign or miracle. "It was never so seen in Israel," they said, according to St Matthew. This no doubt means that never before was there such clear evidence of the restoration of a person possessed with a devil. Israel's priests and elders claimed the ability to cast out devils. The evidence of this miracle was too strong to deny, and they were envious.

The Pharisees expressed the displeasure of official religion by making a contradictory accusation: "He casts out devils through the prince of the devils". St Matthew does not tell us how the Lord reacted to such an absurd accusation on this occasion, but St Luke, reporting the same incident, does. On the other hand, St Matthew records this response in connection with another healing (see 12:25-30), which probably indicates that the Pharisees sought on more than one occasion to discredit

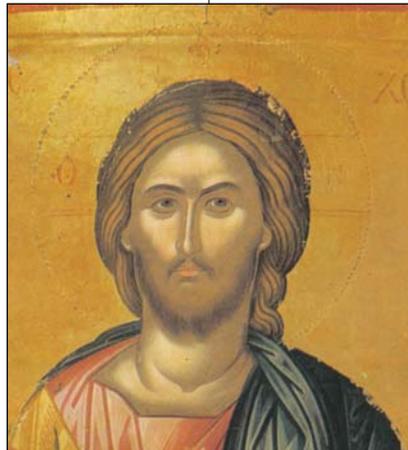


or slander the Lord.

As St Luke's Gospel has it, the Lord said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against itself falls. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because you say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges" (Luke 11:17-19).



The Lord's response has two purposes: first, it shows how illogical the Pharisee's objection is. Since Satan's purpose is to possess souls and lead them to destruction, it hardly makes sense to invoke him to expel himself from one of his victims. He cannot be expected to participate in the division of his own kingdom. Christ's reference to Satan's kingdom here is very significant: the evil one's kingdom is the great enemy of the kingdom of God made accessible ("at hand") to the human race in the coming of Christ.



Any kingdom, even in the worldly sense, is strong insofar as it is united, but dissensions and in-fighting destroy it. The same is true of "a house" (a people), and here we must conclude that Jesus means the house of Israel. Israel cannot endure precisely because it is divided against itself (and here we have the second purpose of the Lord's response), denying its own purpose and destiny by rejecting the Saviour promised by the law and the prophets. For St Ambrose, the Lord's response applies not only to Israel but also to heretics and schismatics, who at the prompting of the unclean spirit, the devil, attempt to set up a kingdom apart from the indivisible, true kingdom, which is Christ's Church (*Treatise on the Gospel According to St Luke*, Book 7, nos. 91-95).

Finally, the Lord had given power and authority to His own apostles to cast out devils (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:15, etc.), and it is clear that they exercised this power (Luke 10:17). They were indeed sons of Israel, and it is to them that the Lord makes reference when He asks, "By whom do your sons cast out devils?" (Luke 11:19). It was from Him that their authority came, and yet they had not been accused of invoking the name of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, to cast out devils. Why, indeed, would they accuse the One who was the very source of this power and not the ones empowered? Their sons, then, are the witnesses that already, by their actions, pass judgment on the Christ-destroying religious leaders.

(Source: *The Miracles of Christ* by Archbishop Dmitri, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York 1999)



# Daily Readings with the Fathers of the Church

## St Basil the Great



Evil and sin set out from our own disposition.

Just as thieves are hidden in shady areas to rob the passerby, thus the devil hides in enjoyments to overcome our soul.

Let us avoid sin, just as the horses avoid poisonous food.

Whereas we receive benefactions from God every minute, we ourselves don't benefactor even once our neighbour.

The more you love money, the more securely you close the kingdom of God.

## St John Chrysostom

When effort on our part is absent, then God's help also stops.

Correct faith does not benefit in anything, when life is corrupted.

Become a good manager of those things given to you by God.

Priests must be more respected to us than every other ruler and more honourable than our parents themselves.

I don't know anything more wretched than the soul, which refuses to honour priests. That soul is full of demonic frenzy.

God left us the relics of Saints wishing to guide us in the same zeal they had.



That person who does not treat his own self unjustly, no one else will be able to harm.

Every work which does not have love as its beginning and root, is nothing.

Whoever bears fruit with works of faith and love, he is a real disciple of Christ.

No friend of gold ever became a friend of Christ.

Ponder the nature of the Eucharistic offering itself. Christ is there, sacrificed. And for what purpose was he sacrificed? To bring peace to the things of heaven and earth, to reconcile you with the God of the universe and make you his friend...What the Son of God has done in this way, you must do too as your human strength allows, by being a builder of peace both for yourself and for others....That is why at the

moment of the sacrifice, the only commandment of which he reminds you is to be reconciled with your brother. Thus he shows you that this is more important than the others.



Do you wish to honour the body of the Saviour? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it in church with silk vestments while outside you are leaving it naked and numb with cold.

He who said, "This is my body," and made it so by his word, is the same that said, "You saw me hungry and you gave me no food. As you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me." Honour him then by sharing your property with the poor. For what God needs is not golden chalices but golden souls.

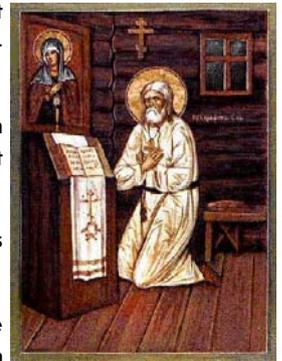
## St Seraphim of Sarov

Whoever wants to be saved must have his heart in a state of repentance and contrition.

Whoever occupies himself with knowledge of his own self will not manage to observe others.

Obtain inner peace and thousands around you will find salvation.

Prayer, fasting, watching may be good in themselves, yet it is not in these practices alone that the goal of our Christian life is to be found, though they are the necessary means for its attainment. The true goal consists in our acquiring the Holy Spirit of God. Fasting and watching, alms and all good works done for the sake of Christ are the means of acquiring the Holy Spirit of God. Great is the power of prayer; more than anything else it brings the Spirit of God. Through prayer we receive the privilege of conversing with God our Saviour himself, all-bountiful and life-giving.



## St Kosmas Aitolos

Whoever has God in his heart, has all goods. And he can't bear to do sin!

...Soul and Christ you need...These two guard; do not lose them.

The main name of our Lord is love ... Just as we love our God, let us also love our brother...

No Christian man or woman should strive only for his own self to be saved, but he should also strive for others, so they are not damned.



## What is Passion? (part 3)

If we act upon this thought by eating more, passion is born.

"Suppose a thought of love of money has been suggested to you. Separate it by analysis: 1. the thought of gold, 2. gold itself, 3. and the money-loving passion. Finally ask: which of these is the sin? Is it the mind? But how can that be, since it is the image of God? Is it the thought of gold then? But what man who has a mind can say even that? Is gold itself a sin? But then why was it created? Thus, it remains the passion, which is neither a concrete independent thing...but an unhuman lust, born of free will and urging the mind to misuse God's creations" (Abba Evagrius, *On Various Evil Thoughts*).

Once our willpower weakens and we begin to indulge in a passionate deed (whether a deed of the mind or the body), then evil spirits seize upon our lack of vigilance and suggest to us even greater sins.

"All thoughts coming from demons introduce into the soul images of sensory objects, and the mind turns them over in itself. So we can learn from this which demon has approached us. For instance, if an image of someone who has done me harm or who has insulted me comes into my mind, it shows that the demon of resentment has drawn near...I do not mean that all memories of such things come from demons...but only those which *unnaturally evoke excitation or desires*" (Abba Evagrius, *On Various Evil Thoughts*). This is why St John of Damascus says that "passion is a movement against nature," immoderate and intense (*On the Orthodox Faith*).

"If we deliberately...give ourselves either to eating or drinking beyond measure...then we replace the body's naturally gentle movement by one that is violent and unbridled.

"All that God has created, He created most beautifully and harmoniously. And as long as this degree of harmony with

what we are by nature is preserved in us, natural movements cannot force us to stray from the path. Only harmonious movements arise in the body, which merely inform us of the existence of a natural passion, but produce no excitement or turmoil so strong as to interfere...Attacks come from our laziness and excessive indulgence of the flesh...When the body is kept within bounds, thoughts cannot indulge in dangerous flights" (St Isaac of Syria, *Directions on Spiritual Training*).

"Those who are not satisfied with what they have to sustain life" - whether it be food, clothing, position in life, etc.-"but who seek for more, make themselves the slaves of passions which trouble the soul and introduce into it ever worse thoughts and fantasies: the idea that everything is bad, and therefore new and better things must be acquired.

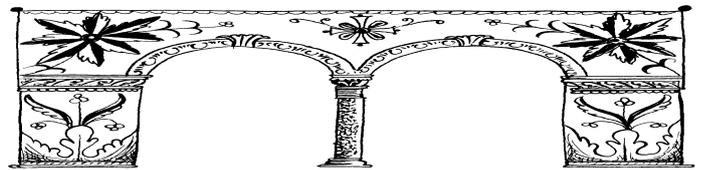
Just as very long garments hinder travellers in their walking, so excessive desire...does not allow the soul to make efforts to be saved" (St Anthony the Great, *170 Texts on Saintly Life*).

But to "the extent that each man believes the Lord concerning future blessings, and despises human glory and pleasures, to that extent he will have power to control his thoughts and to be more at peace than a man who loves pleasures...No power impels

us forcibly either to good or evil. But for whomever we work of our own free will, be it God or the Evil One, that one incites us to do those things which are of him" (St Mark the Ascetic, *Directions from Discourses*).

"If a man arms himself with patience and an unswerving faithfulness to the commandments of God, the Holy Spirit will teach his mind how to purify his soul and body from such movements. But if at any time he weakens in his feeling and permits himself to neglect the commandments and ordinances which he has heard, evil spirits will begin to overpower him, will press upon all parts of his body, and will befoul it...until the tormented soul will not know where to turn" (St Anthony the Great, *Directions on Life in Christ*). *(To be continued)*

(Source: The Teaching of the Holy Fathers on the Passions, Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society 2004)





# Confronting the Devil, Magic & the Occult: Part 6

## Weapons against the Devil

### What a Tibetan Occultist Saw

In 1970, an occultist from Tibet visited Athens. As he was walking along the street, he saw, by divine dispensation, devils who had attached themselves to people. There was a devil on the neck, another on the ears, another on the nose, another on the mouth and so on. But the occultist also saw something that set him thinking, namely, that the devils were unable to approach priests. They went all around them, circling to find an opening, but were unable to do so.

"Who are these people with beards and black clothing?" the occultist asked a passerby.

"They are the priests of our Church, etc." explained the other.

"And if you want to see a lot of them, and good ones at that, go to the Holy Mountain."

He went to the Holy Mountain, where the monks directed him to Father Paisios (1994). As a result, the occultist became aware of certain things. He repented. He was baptised. He became a Christian and took the name Theodore.

Why couldn't the devil attach himself to priests? Because they belong to Christ's priesthood. And through this office, they perform sacraments, which, as we shall see, cause the devil to tremble.

### "Three things I Fear"

Our holy Fathers fought the devil hand to hand. Very often they talked to him and learned his "secrets." In one such discussion, the devil was forced to confess to an ascetic, "There are three things I fear. First, what the Christians hang about their necks (the Cross). Second, the bath they take in church (confession), and third, what they eat and drink in church (Holy Communion)." Now note this: he feared these things so much that he wouldn't even refer to them directly. And the devil added to the holy ascetic: "What I fear most of all is what the Christians eat and drink in church, provided, of course, they do so with a clear conscience."

We are like fire-breathing lions to the demons, when we take communion (says St John Chrysostom). "As lions breathing fire, so do we depart from that table, having become terrible to the demons."

### A message

"Three things I fear," said the devil. Yet these three things are all part of Christianity. It's as if the devil were saying that of all faiths (Buddhism, Islam, etc.) he fears ONLY Christianity, because Christians alone have the

appropriate weapons to fight him.

This means the following: Only by Christianity is the devil bound hand and foot. In the other religions he has a free range of action. "For all the gods of the heathens are devils, but the Lord made the heavens (Ps 95:5)." And, "They sacrificed to demons, not to God (Dt 32:17)."

### Exorcism

Another very important weapon against the devil is exorcism.

### At Baptism

According to the Holy Fathers, the devil is at the centre of the soul of the unbaptised infant. Through exorcism, he is expelled from the heart and the person is set free. "Depart from him/her, every evil and unclean spirit hidden and lurking in the heart." So exorcism is a dreadful experience for the devil. He is challenged to depart from his victim. And like it or not, he departs.

Since the exorcism prayers at baptism are so specifically aimed at our salvation, St Symeon of Thessaloniki advises that they be said very clearly and not just once. Otherwise the devil will find a way to trouble the Christian.

In the early Christian Church, the reading of the exorcism prayers was a separate and impressive ritual.

- There were special priests who read the prayers, the "exorcists."
- They were read many times: "Absorb yourselves in the exorcism prayers," St Cyril of Jerusalem urged those under instruction for baptism,

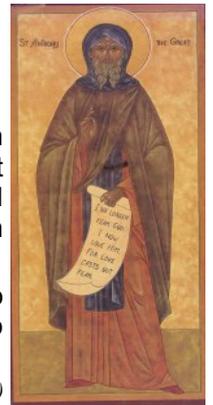
- The catechumens covered their eyes and faces, so as not to have their attention distracted (as happens today at the ordination of a deacon, who covers his head and face with a "towel").

### For "Curses" and the Possessed

Our Church uses the exorcism prayers of St Basil the Great and St John Chrysostom, which are read over all those who are suffering from possession of curse.

The late Father Porfyrios, who knew much about demons, used to say about the exorcism prayers:

*(Continued on page 7)*



# Confronting the Devil, Magic & the Occult

(from page 6)

- They were not to be read unless there was a serious, specific reason.
- They were to be read silently (without those present being able to hear).
- self-appointed exorcists, and those who read the prayers aloud in public, he berates.
- when the exorcism prayers are not read when and as they should be, then the devil assails the victim, the priest and those present.

## Satan Infuriated

When the exorcism prayers are read over someone who is not yet baptised, Satan becomes infuriated. Something similar occurs when they are read over someone who is possessed. The devil, who is "bombarded" by the prayers, is challenged to depart from his victim. He is called upon to do something he detests. And he becomes very angry!

## The Victim

The furious devil takes it out on his victim! He tortures him horribly. He contorts him and makes him writhe.

## The Priest / Exorcist

In December, 1996, a lady went to a church in the town of Patras in Greece and asked the priest (who later told the story) to read the exorcism prayers of St Basil the Great. The priest was willing and did as she requested.

As he made his way back home, stones began falling around him. He looked back but could see no one. Then, at midnight, something terrible happened. The whole house began to shake. The plates and the glasses in the kitchen sink were hurled against the wall and smashed. The cupboards in the house crashed to the floor. The priest quickly put on his stole, read the prayers which began "Holy God..." and the wickedness stopped.

It's quite clear. The demons were infuriated by the exorcism prayers and attacked the "culprit".



## Onlookers

At the time of St John Chrysostom, possessed people would be brought to the Divine Liturgy. Some Christians who were present at one such service were not paying attention and were chatting among them-

selves. St John, who was an expert in the wiles of the devil, addressed his flock:

"Aren't you worried, now that you're making this noise, in case one of these demons leaps out and finds your soul vacant, like a house without a door, and just walks in? Even if you don't care about your possessed brethren, take pity on yourselves. Close the door of your soul against the evil demon."

So, when you attend an exorcism without due attention, you could become possessed yourself!

## Humility

The experience of our holy Fathers teaches that what draws demons out of people is humility.

There was a father who had a daughter who was possessed. He took her to a hermit to have her restored to health. As soon as the possessed girl saw the hermit, she slapped his face. Not only did he not react but, in accordance with the Lord's commandment, he offered the other cheek as well. This attitude of his (humility) was a blow to the demon. At once it began to cry: "I'm being driven out by the Lord's commandment." The possessed girl was made well again. Thereafter, the elders glorified God and said, "Nothing annihilates the pride of the devil so much as humility."

A possessed person went to an Elder to be cured. Because the Elder considered himself unworthy, he refused. At the insistence of the relatives of the sick man, however, he relented:

"Get out of God's creature," he said to the demon.

"I'm going," said the demon, "but tell me, who are the sheep and who are the goats?"

"I'm the goats," said the Elder, brokenly. "As for the sheep, God knows them."

"Your humility is driving me out!" wailed the possessed person, and he was then cured.

When they took a possessed person to Anthony the Great, he also, great saint though he was, considered himself unworthy of driving out demons. So he sent the possessed person to his disciple Abba Paul the Simple. As the disciple was exorcising the demon, it departed from the victim, crying, "Anthony the Great's humility is driving me out!" (To be continued)

(Source: *Confronting the Devil, Magic & the Occult* by Archim. Vassilios Bakoyiannis, Orthodox Book Centre, Athens 2003)



# Feast Day of St Elijah (Elias) 20 July

We have read about many great spiritual men of the Old Testament. One of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament was the Prophet Elijah, and his name will live forever in the hearts of all God-fearing people throughout the world.

Elijah was a fearless man of God who preached against the wrong behaviour of the people of Israel, and their belief in false gods. He enabled them to return to their belief in the only true God. He lived during the ninth century before the coming of Christ. As a Jewish prophet he announced the glory of one God of the universe. His clashes with the evil Queen Jezebel have been recorded in the Old Testament for everyone



to read of the greatness of Elijah. We all should read about the amazing life of the great Saint who has been compared with Moses as one of the greatest leaders of all time (in the Old Testament, read I Kings, Chapter 17-22 and II Kings, Chapter 1 & 2).

During the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, the people did not have a true idea of God. Many people were confused and worshipped Baal, a nature god, rather than one true God as proclaimed by Moses to the first people of Israel. It was during this time that Elijah retreated for many months to the sacred area of Mount Sinai. It was there that he spoke with Almighty God. It was at Mount Sinai that he learned that God is invisible and spiritual.

Elijah had the unique privilege not to die a natural death on earth. According to tradition, Elijah was taken up into heaven in a flaming chariot as a reward for his great work among men. So great was his fame that many Israelites said that he would return one day to lead the people of Israel once again. In fact, when St John the Baptist and Jesus Christ appeared in history 800 years later, many thought that they were Elijah back from heaven.

## AUGUST THE THIRTEENTH MATTHIAS

Our Blessed Lord chose twelve men to assist Him in proclaiming the new Faith to all the world. These twelve men were as follows:

1. Peter (Simon)
2. Andrew (Brother of Peter)
3. James (Son of Zebedee)
4. John (Son of Zebedee)
5. Phillip
6. Bartholmew
7. Matthew (Levi)
8. Thomas
9. James (Son of Alphaeus)
10. Thaddeus
11. Simon the Zealot
12. Judas Iscariot

These were the original Apostles of Christ. After Judas betrayed our Lord, the remaining eleven Apostles chose Matthias (see Acts of the Apostles) to take the place of Judas Iscariot.

Matthias was a gentle soul who loved Jesus very much. He was among the famous "Seventy" original followers of Jesus Christ. After Matthias was chosen as the twelfth Apostle, he immediately began to preach the word of Christ in many lands. He is credited with helping to convert to Christianity the country of Armenia (which is now part of Turkey and Russia). It was in the country of Armenia (on Mt Ararat) that, according to the Old Testament, Noah landed with his famous ark to begin a new life after the great flood which brought destruction to the world. Matthias desired to preach "the new life" in this same area and, together with five other Apostles, brought Christianity to the country of Armenia. It was the first nation in history to accept Christianity.



Matthias wrote a famous book entitled "The Traditions of Matthias" which was used and quoted very frequently by the early Church Fathers. Matthias journeyed to the strange land of Ethiopia in Africa and preached the Gospel of Christ to the barbaric tribes of Abyssinia. It was here that Matthias was subjected to severe persecution by the pagans and was finally tortured and murdered by the citizens of Ethiopia. Many of the Ethiopians were converted during Matthias' mission, and today that country is a Christian Orthodox nation.

(Source: *Lives of the Saints & Major Feast Days* by Rev. George Poulos, Brookline, Massachusetts 1974)



# Devotions in honour of the blessed Virgin Mary

## August 1st - August 15th

The Orthodox Christian Church has set four major feast days for the Mother of God, Mary. The Feast Days in honour of the Blessed Theotokos are as follows:

1. The Nativity of the Virgin Mary on the 8th of September at which time we celebrate the birth of the Mother of God.



2. The Presentation of Mary on



November 21st at which time we remember the day when the parents of Mary, Joachim and Anna, brought her to the Temple and dedicated her life to God.

3. The Annunciation of Mary on

the 25th March at which time we celebrate one of the greatest events in all history, when the Archangel Gabriel appeared before Mary and announced that she would become the Mother of God.

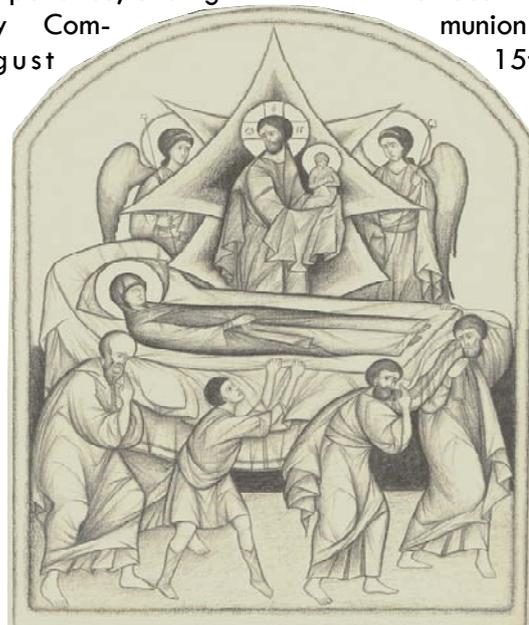


4. The Dormition (falling asleep) of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 15th when she died and on the third day (according to Holy Tradition) she went bodily into Heaven.

This great feast day of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary is preceded by 15 days of devotions

and prayers to the Blessed Mother of God. A strict period of fasting is observed, and the Orthodox Christians throughout the world observe the feast day by participating in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Just below the beautiful gardens in Gethsemane at Jerusalem, one will observe the Tomb of the Blessed Virgin Mary which is located at the base of the tomb 100 feet below the surface of the earth. As one descends the stairs of the tomb, he will observe on his left (at the 50 foot level) the tomb of the parents of Mary, Joachim and Anna. At the immediate right, one will find the tomb of the protector of Mary, St Joseph. At the base of the marble staircase, is the empty tomb of the Mother of God. In accordance with Holy Tradition, when the time came for the Mother of God to depart from this earth to join her Son in Heaven, she called all of the Apostles of Christ at her bedside. All of the Apostles were present at the time of her burial, with the exception of St Thomas who returned too late for the funeral. He asked to see the body of Mary, which had already been buried for three days. When the tomb was opened, they were amazed to find that the body of Mary was gone. An angel of the Lord appeared and announced that she had been taken into Heaven. This is the belief of all Orthodox in accordance with Holy Tradition (the unwritten source of our Faith). The Church, however, has not stated officially the belief that the Virgin Mary was actually taken into Heaven. The Church, until such time that a true Ecumenical Council is called, refers to the feast day of the "Repose of the Theotokos" (the falling-asleep of the Mother of God). In accordance with the Orthodox Church, the feast day is observed by a period of fasting and penance, ending with the receiving of Holy Communion on August 15th.



# The importance and value of Memorial Services (Part 2)

## SCRIPTURAL AND OTHER EVIDENCE FOR THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF MEMORIAL SERVICES

### A. Evidence from Holy Scripture *The Old Testament*

The first reference to memorial services is in the book of Nehemiah, where the Israelites pray to God to forgive the sins of their deceased forefathers. "Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth upon his heads. And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day; for another fourth of it they made confession and worshipped the Lord their God." (Nehemiah 9:1-4)

The second book of Maccabees (12:36-45) refers to the following event. Judah Maccabee emerged the victor in his battle with Gorgia, but many of his men had been killed. On the day following the battle Judah's men came hurriedly to carry away the dead bodies of those who had been killed and to bury them in the same place as their relatives, in the same tomb as their ancestors. However, hidden in the clothing of each of the dead men they found small idols of the gods of Jamneia, something that was strictly forbidden by Judaic law. It was thus clear to all that these men had been killed because of the idols. The courageous Judah urged his people not to sin any further. What is more, he collected a contribution from each man and sent two thousand drachmae of silver to Jerusalem to be used for a sacrifice for the atonement of Israel's sins. He did this because he believed in the resurrection of the dead; for if he had not believed that even these sinful men who had died could be resurrected, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them. And so they made a sacrifice for the atonement of the dead, so that the recently departed might be absolved of the sin they had committed.

### *The New Testament*

In his second epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul refers to Onisimos, who is already dead: "May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day." (2 Timothy 1:18)

We see, therefore, that passages from Holy Scripture explicitly refer to prayer on behalf of those who have passed away. This is the reason why memorial services are encountered in the life of the Church as far back as the earliest centuries.

Moreover, this is the case because, as the Apostle Paul writes, all of us, both living and dead, constitute "the body of Christ and [are] individually members of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Such is the evidence of Holy Scripture.

### B. Evidence from the Church's Holy Tradition

#### 1) *The Church Fathers*

The holy tradition of the Church provides us with

a great deal of information.

A) **The Apostolic Constitution**, one of the most ancient books of our Church, teaches that memorial services should be performed for the dead on the third, ninth and fortieth days following their death and annually thereafter.

B) **Tertullian** (200 A.D.), one of the earliest ecclesiastical authors, repeatedly refers to the liturgies that were performed on behalf of the deceased, particularly in his work *Concerning the Crown*.

C) **The Holy martyr Kyprianos** (250 A. D.) informs us in one of his letters that Christians considered it a basic duty to offer sacrifices and prayers for the dead.

D) **The historian Eusebius**, describing the magnificent funeral of Constantine the Great in the Church of the Holy Apostles, writes that the body of his blessed soul had "joined the flock of God's people and was worthy of ... the divine liturgy."

E) **St Ambrose, the Bishop of Mediolana (330-337)**, performed holy liturgies daily for Valentinian, Theodosios and Satyr.

F) **St Augustine (354-430)**, after describing his mother's funeral,

reports that while her body was still at the gravesite "the sacrifice for our redemption" was offered "as usual," since his mother, as he himself later on notes, considered nothing so important as to have her name mentioned during the divine liturgy.



St Augustine also wrote an entire book on the subject of the deceased, *De Cura Pro Mortuis*.

G) In his *Catechisms*, **St Cyril of Jerusalem** mentions that after the blessing of the Holy Eucharist "we commemorate the dead, first the Patriarchs and then the Apostles, Prophets and Martyrs, so that through their prayers and intercessions God will accept our own prayers."

H) **St John of Damascus** wrote an entire treatise entitled "On behalf of the Faithful Who Have Died."

I) In this context, **St John Chrysostom** writes: "It was not by chance that the Apostles laid down that at the time we perform the fearful mysteries we should remember those who have departed from this life. They knew that this is of great value and benefit."

J) As he was being led to his martyrdom in 1520, **the neomartyr St James** instructed his disciples to perform memorial services for his soul, according to the practice of the Church.

K) Let us also not forget the saint of our century, **St Nektarios**, who wrote an entire treatise "Concerning Holy Memorial Services" in which he demonstrates the benefit derived from the performance of memorial services, citing numerous passages from the Church Fathers and detailed events from the lives of the saints of our Church. **(To be continued)**

*(Source: The Memorial Services and their benefits by Hieromonk Benedict, New Skete, Mt Athos, 2002)*



## From the Old Testament - The Psalms

### Psalm Seven (7)

PRAYER AND PRAISE FOR  
DELIVERANCE OF ENEMIES

O LORD my God, in You I put my trust; Save me from all those who persecute me; And deliver me, Lest they tear me like a lion, Rending me in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

O LORD my God, if I have done this:

If there is iniquity in my hands,  
If I have repaid evil to him who was at peace with me, Or have plundered my enemy without cause, Let the enemy pursue me and overtake me; Yes, let him trample my life to the earth,  
And lay my honour in the dust.

Arise, O LORD, in Your anger; Lift Yourself up because of the rage of my enemies; Rise up for me to the judgement You have commanded! So the congregation of the people shall surround You; For their sakes, therefore, return on high.

The LORD shall judge the peoples; Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, And according to my integrity within me.

Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, But establish the just; For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds. My defence is of God, Who saves the upright in heart.

God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day. If he does not turn back, He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready. He also prepares for Himself instruments of death; He makes His arrows into fiery shafts.

Behold, the wicked brings forward iniquity; Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood. He made a pit and dug it out, And has fallen into the ditch which he made. His trouble shall return upon his own head, And his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown.

I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness, And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High

[ This is a psalm of David, who prays to be saved from his persecutors (v. 1). His words show the fierce enmities bred by the religious and political strife within the community (vv. 2, 6-16), and his defense against the accusations of the enemy (vv. 3-5) ]



(Source: The Orthodox Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee 1997)

Saint Nestor

# Prayer



Every prayer that we send to God in faith is answered. This does not mean that whatever we ask is granted, because He knows what is best for us. Our minds are restricted to a limited environment. Our prayers should not be insistent and demanding, but humble.

It is helpful to know that the Fathers of the Church recommended that prayer should contain the following:

1) Begin with a **Doxology** (praise) addressed to God through Christ, Who is praised together with Him and the Holy Spirit.

E.g. "Blessed is our God, always, now and forevermore. Amen. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore. Amen."

2) Second, offer **Thanks** for all that God has blessed us with...

E.g. "Thank you Lord for all that you have blessed us with, both those blessings that we know and those that we do not know about."

3) Third, we **Ask for Forgiveness** as we **Forgive all Others...**

E.g. "Forgive me for all my mistakes as I forgive all others."

4) Fourth, we **Petition** or **pray for others** and then finally, **for ourselves...**

E.g. "Watch over Your world, blessing all creation." "If it is Your will, please help me with....."

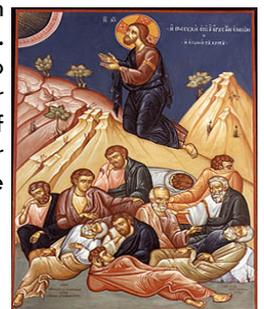
5) Finally, end with a **Doxology...**

E.g. "For You are blessed now and forevermore. Amen." "Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen."

## AN ORTHODOX PRAYER FOR ANY OCCASSION

**CHRIST OUR GOD**, who at all times and places is worshipped and glorified - both in heaven and on earth - Who is long-suffering, generous in mercy; rich in compassion, loving to the just, merciful to the sinner and Who calls all men and women to repentance - through the promises of blessings to come - direct our lives in the way of Your Commandments. Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, set our minds right, cleanse our thoughts, deliver us from all affliction, wrath, danger and need. Surround us with Your holy angels, so that guided and guarded in their camp, we may reach the oneness of the Faith and the knowledge of Your unutterable glory. For You are blessed, now and forevermore. Amen.

(Source: An Introduction to Prayer, 3rd Edition by Rev. Dr Dean P. Talagan)



July - August 2007 Issue, page 11

# Orthodox Christian Calendar 2007

This monthly (x2) calendar is provided for your information. It aims to give you an insight into the Orthodox Christian Church year of 2007 and hopes to prove useful and beneficial with its indications. The calendar provides you with a day-by-day outlook of the following pieces of information: **1. The Greater Feast days (†)** celebrated in the Orthodox Christian Church. **2. The main fasting and non-fasting periods** in the Church and the strictness of each of these fasts. **3. The schedule of English Divine Liturgies**, where these are held and at what time. **4. Main Vespers Services** held at each of our Melbourne, VIC Parishes (commence 7p.m.) **5. Public Holidays** and **other events** held.

## Month of August

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 FAST BEGINS FOR THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS	2	3	4
			ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	
5 † 10TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	6 † TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD (Fish permitted)	7	8	9	10	11
VESPERS: TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, THOMASTOWN	ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS ***** PARAKLISIS IN ENGLISH AT ST. EUSTATHIOS, 5TH MELBOURNE, 7.30-8.30pm	ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	ENGLISH LITURGY AT GEELONG MONASTERY, 9.00 - 10.00am
12 † 11TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	13	14	15 † THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS (FAST ENDS: Fish Permitted only)	16	17	18
	ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	ALL CHURCHES: VESPERS FOR THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS				
19 † 12TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	20	21	22	23 †	24 †	25
	CYC Monthly Talk: VIDEO & TALK, at the HALL OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE, 221 Dorcas St., 5th Melbourne, 7.00 pm			THANKSGIVING FOR FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS	ST KOSMAS OF AITOLIA	
26 † 13TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	27 † ST PHANOURIOS THE GREAT MARTYR	28	29 † BEHEADING OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST (Strict Fast)	30	31	
		VESPERS: ST JOHN, CARLTON				

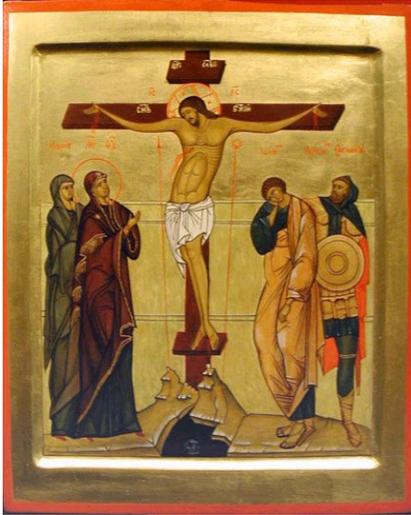
# Month of September

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30 † 2ND SUNDAY OF LUKE  VESPERS: PANAGIA GORGEPKOOS, GEELONG						1 † BEGINNING OF THE INDICTION (New Ecclesiastical Year)
2 † 14TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	4  ENGLISH LITURGY AT ST. EUSTATHIOS, STH MELBOURNE, 7.30—8.45pm	5	6	7	VESPERS: PANAGIA KAMARIANI, RED HILL	8 † THE BIRTH OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS
9 † SUNDAY BEFORE THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS (St Joachim & Anna)	11	12	13	14 † THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS (Strict Fast)	15 ENGLISH LITURGY AT GEELONG MONASTERY, 9.00 – 10.00am	
16 † SUNDAY AFTER THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS (St Euphemia the Great Martyr)	18 ST SOPHIA & FAMILY	19	20 † ST EUSTATHIOS THE GREAT MARTYR & HIS FAMILY	VESPERS: HOLY CROSS, BOX HILL	21	22
23 † 1ST SUNDAY OF LUKE (Conception of St John the Baptist)	24 † PANAGIA MYRTIDIOTISSA  CYC MONTHLY TALK: , at St Eustathios, South Melbourne, 7.30 pm	25	26 † FALLING ASLEEP OF ST JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN	27	28	29

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

SECOND ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Central Youth Monthly Lectures



# “The Crucifixion and the Resurrection: the Dynamics for Eternal Salvation”

*presented by*

**Mr Theo Theodorou**

*on*

***Monday, 24th September 2007***

*at the*

***Greek Orthodox Church of  
St Eustathius***

***221 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne***

***Commencing at 7.30pm***



***For further information telephone: 9690 1595 or 9696 2488***

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

SECOND ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Central Youth Monthly Lectures

# “A glimpse of Hell”

*presented by*

**Rev. Fr Timothy Evangelinidis**

on

***Monday,  
8th October  
2007***

*at the*

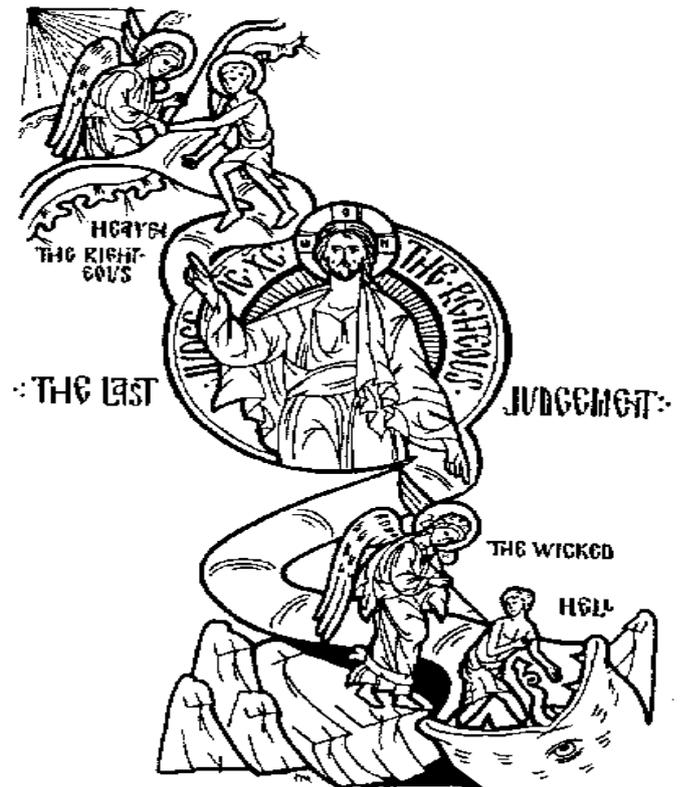
***Greek Orthodox Church of St Eustathius***

***221 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne***

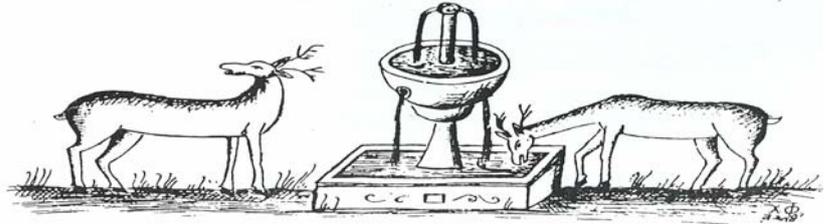
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***For further information telephone:***

***9690 1595 or 9696 2488***



SAINT NESTOR IS PUBLISHED  
BY THE CENTRAL YOUTH  
COMMITTEE OF THE GREEK  
ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF  
AUSTRALIA — SECOND  
ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF  
VICTORIA & TASMANIA



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contributions and announcements,  
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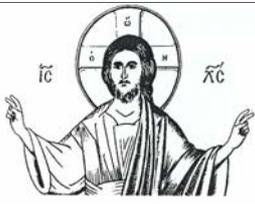
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# Saint Nestor

CENTRAL YOUTH COMMITTEE MAGAZINE



## Youth Group Meetings in Victoria



**Ascot Vale:** St. Dimitrios  
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9375 1119)

**Brunswick:** St. Basil  
Wednesday 6.30 p.m. (9387 7693)

**Clayton:** Three Hierarchs  
Monday 7.30 p.m. (9544 5706)

**Coburg:** Presentation of our Lord  
Tuesday 7.45 p.m. (9350 5559)

**Dandenong:** St. Panteleimon  
Thursday 7.30 p.m. (9791 8369)  
([www.dandenongyouth.com](http://www.dandenongyouth.com))

**East Kellon:** Panagia Soumela  
Monday 7.00 p.m. (9331 2010)

**East Malvern:** St. Catherine  
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9563 6623)

**Fawkner:** St. Nektarios  
Wednesday 7.00 p.m. (9359 4404)

**Forest Hill:** St. Andrew  
Monday 7.30 p.m. (9802 0165)

**Northcote:** Axion Esti Monastery  
Monday 7.30 p.m. (9481 7826)

**Oakleigh:** Sts. Anargyri,  
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9569 6874)

**Richmond:** Holy Trinity  
Thursday 7.30 p.m. (9428 1284)  
([parishofholymtrinityrichmond@yahoo.com](mailto:parishofholymtrinityrichmond@yahoo.com))

**South Melbourne:** St. Eustathios  
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9690 1595)

**Springvale:** St. Athanasios,  
Saturday 6.00 p.m. (9547 8610)

**Templestowe:** St. Haralambos  
Tuesday 8.30 p.m. (9846 4066)

**Thomastown:** Transfiguration of the  
Lord,  
Thursday 7.30 p.m. (9465 9907)

**Yarraville:** St. Nicholas  
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9687 1513)

Icon of Saint Nestor from the Monastery of Stavronikita (Mount Athos) by Theophan the Cretan