

Thirty-Third Sunday After Pentecost
Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

February 9, 2025

*On February 9th we Celebrate:
The Leave-Taking of the Meeting of our Lord Jesus Christ.
The Holy Martyr Nikifóros of Antioch.*



Icon of the Publican and the Pharisee

Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission

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Great Vespers, Saturday Evenings at 6:00 pm
Divine Liturgy, Sunday Mornings at 9:30 am (Hours at 9:05 am)
Paraklesis to the Theotokos, Wednesday Evenings at 6:00 pm
Very Reverend Archpriest Luke Uhl, Retired, Interim Rector

*Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission
is a parish in the Diocese of the West
of the Orthodox Church in America
under the spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of
Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West*



EPISTLE AND GOSPEL READINGS

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33rd Sunday of the Epistles, (296) 2 Timothy 3:10-15

MY SON TIMOTHY, You have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Epistle for the Feast of the Presentation, (316) Hebrews 7:7-17

BRETHREN, Beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: “You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Gospel for the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, Luke 18:10-14

THE LORD SPOKE THIS PARABLE: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you; this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

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Now when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Publican was a man of wealth and civic importance; materially wealthy, he knew he was spiritually impoverished.

The Pharisee was an important figure in Jewish society, an ardent student of the Law of Moses.

Both men stood before the Lord to pray: the Publican bowed in repentance, while the Pharisee proudly stood up and boasted.

One man won the blessing of the Lord by his sobbing and his tears; the other man lost his reward through boasting.

The Great Fast is a time for Christians to examine themselves and to make an honest appraisal of their lives. If we are truthful, we must admit that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory to which God calls us. Indeed, everything we do falls short of that ultimate glory.

Aware of our shortcomings, let us sigh with the Publican and ask Christ God to forgive us and to be our strength.

Aware of our sins and the many ways we have hurt ourselves and others, let us shed tears of repentance, mindful that tears justified the Publican – and not the Pharisee.

May the Lord count us worthy to be numbered with the Publican and have mercy upon us! *Amen.*

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel of the Publican and Pharisee opens the Lenten Triodion, and we enter the sacred precincts of Great Lent. Almost immediately, the sacred presence permeating the Church is more palpably felt, and a sacred stillness settles on the soul. We are drawing near to a holy sanctuary shrouded with a spiritual presence and a sacred stillness.

This holy sanctuary is the tomb of Christ. This spiritual presence is the “Glory of God.” It is the same Glory that descended on the holy tabernacle of Israel in the wilderness, on the Blessed Virgin at the Annunciation, on the Christ in the waters of the Jordan, and on the holy disciples at Pentecost.

This is the first of four Gospels that bring us to the shores of Great Lent. This Gospel of the Publican and the Pharisee prepares us for that fourth Sunday Gospel when we “step off the boat” and “pass over” onto the shore of Great Lent with the Vespers of Forgiveness.

Examining our inner life against the lives of the saints, and the mystery of Christ’s Holy Pascha, it becomes clear that none of us even begins to *understand* the deep mystery of God’s forgiveness. Moreover, we realize that few, if any, of us can say that we have *found* the forgiveness of God – and if we do say it, we may be in danger of deluding ourselves.

Thus, the Gospel of the Publican and the Pharisee, and the other Gospels of the pre-Lenten period, set us on the path that brings us to where we find the forgiveness of God. This does not mean that God has not forgiven us; rather, it means we have not *found* the forgiveness He bestows on us – even if we make our annual confession.

It is well and good for us to believe that God has forgiven us, for indeed He has. We know this from the words of Christ on the Cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” But it is *not* well and good for us to believe that we have found that forgiveness simply because we have “confessed our sins” as the Church asks of us. If so, we simply remain “sick” in our sins and unhealed.

Why is this? Because sins make us spiritually dead. Therefore, we must find God’s forgiveness of our sins where we are dead: in the tomb of our heart.

To find the forgiveness of God in the tomb of our heart, we must get to that place. But, if we are in the least bit like the Pharisee, we can’t get to the tomb of our heart, in fact we can’t even make the “turn” in the road that sets off for the tomb of our heart.

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Continued from page 4 ☞ How do we find the tomb of our heart; how do we find God's forgiveness? We must deny ourselves. We must decrease, that Christ may increase. We must lose our life for the sake of Christ and His holy Gospel so that it is no longer we who live but Christ Who lives in us. We must take up our Cross to follow Him and be united with Him in a death like His. We must lay aside every rationalization, excuse, self-justification, and denial to stand before God and say in a broken and contrite heart, "I have sinned. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

To come to confession and confess our sins is the beginning of the path that leads to the tomb of our heart. But not until that confession is accompanied by a laying aside of every excuse and by the tears of a sacred mourning will that confession begin to draw us near to the tomb of our heart as to the tomb of Christ's Holy Pascha.

It is in that tomb that we find the forgiveness of God that He has poured out on all people from the love of His Holy Cross. And, only when we have truly died to ourselves in that tomb in the likeness of Christ's death, does the forgiveness we find in that tomb raise up in us the fruit of repentance: it is the fruit of Christ's Holy Resurrection.

This Gospel of the Church helps us discern the lie that leads us to believe that I am forgiven, that I am justified, *simply* by doing the obligatory things of the Church. Because if that's all I do, I'm like the Pharisee.

If, like the Pharisee, I fast and pray and read Holy Scripture, but have not come into the tomb of my heart and died to myself, I have not found the forgiveness of God that raises me up in the resurrection of His Christ. I am like a white-washed tomb; pretty, proper and prim, pious and religious on the outside, but dead on the inside, dead in my heart. I have not yet resurrected with Christ because I have not died in Christ.

How do I practice dying to myself? It is simple: by dying for others. Husband, set aside your desires to please your wife. Wife, likewise, set aside your desires to honor your husband. Children, set aside your pride to listen to your beloved parents. Let us all set aside "our way," and "go out of our way," for the good of others around us!

In the prayer of the Publican, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!" the Church directs our eyes to the portals of Great Lent drawing near. This Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving: all three are directed away from self, and toward "other" ... especially toward God and toward those whom He creates in His image! Amen.

Reverend Paul Wesche, Saint Herman's Orthodox Church, Minneapolis, MN

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

There are a couple of common misunderstandings about today's Gospel.

First, who is the Publican? The word "publican" does not mean someone who keeps a pub: in older English it simply means a tax-collector. The publicans were what we would call today, "government contractors." The Roman authorities then as today, contracted out many services: construction, provisioning, tax collecting, and others. Among the Jews, their own people who were tax collectors were regarded as traitors to the nation, collaborators with the Roman occupiers, and thieves: on the surface, corrupt to the core.

Second, what about the Pharisee? At that time, the word "pharisee" did not necessarily have the meaning of a smug bigot and hypocritical prig. Among the Jews, the Pharisees were the most devout, upstanding, law-abiding, and respected, middle-class citizens: on the surface models of righteousness.

And yet in today's Gospel, Christ justifies the "thieving Publican" but condemns the "middle-class citizen." Why? Because of their *attitudes*.

The Publican has the right attitude: he is conscious of his sins, repentant of them, and asks God for mercy.

The Pharisee, on the other hand, has the wrong attitude: he has no consciousness of his sinfulness, falls under the illusion of being righteous, and does not ask God for mercy.

The Publican has no illusion about his external infidelity to the Law of Moses, and his internal moral corruption.

The Pharisee has the illusion that having apparently fulfilled the outward observances of the Jewish Law yet inwardly being judgmental of others, he is justified before God.

The error of the Pharisee is to confuse the means with the end. He focuses on the externals; his piety is for show and does not come from the heart. He may do the right things, but for the wrong reasons, and they lose their benefit.

The Publican is focused on the goal: God's mercy and forgiveness *which alone "make us right."* He recognizes that he needs God, and that God does not need him but loves him. He well knows the words of Psalm 50: "*With whole-burnt offerings Thou shalt not be pleased. a sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit; a broken and humbled heart God will not despise.*"

Our focus is to attain salvation, to prepare for life in the Kingdom of heaven. There is an expression in the world: "There is no second prize in war." The idea behind this earthly reality is far, far more true in regard to heavenly truth: "There is no second prize in spiritual warfare – in the struggle to attain salvation." Failure is not an option.

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Continued from page 6 ☞ We simply have no other good option in this life but to prepare ourselves for eternal life. The inevitable destiny of every soul is to be with God in eternity, to be in the presence of Love. Those who are prepared will experience Divine Love in His presence. Those who are not prepared will experience a burning, unfulfillable yearning in His presence.

To be prepared is to be pure in heart. As it is written: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”* Those who are not pure in heart will not be able to see God but will eternally feel painful regret and sorrow.

The Orthodox Church, like the Law of Moses, offers us many *external* ascetic practices to *assist* us in developing *inner* holiness and purity of heart. We embrace these, and fulfill these, not for external show but as exercises – spiritual calisthenics – that strengthen the core of our being.

During the Great Fast we emphasize and strengthen our practice of the three *daily* ascetic practices of Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving.

We can – and we absolutely must – pray. Our fundamental activity is to pray everywhere and at all times. As the Apostle Paul writes, *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16).*

We have no other option than to pray daily at home *and to pray in community at the parish church*. Only in the church services are we close to Him in a particular way and find it easier to speak to Him in prayer. Only in the church services do we learn how to pray and develop the “muscle memory” of prayer. Most importantly, only at church can we partake of the sacraments.

Fasting is indispensable to salvation: if I cannot control a small, physical thing like what I place into my mouth, it is highly unlikely that I could resist thoughts that enter my mind.

The Orthodox approach to fasting is balanced. This coming week, there is no fast, to remind us that salvation is not in fasting. Yet it is also true that fasting for the sake of Christ helps us draw closer to salvation.

It is true saying that “God loves me more than any other person.” Yet He also individually loves all other people more than any others; rationally this is obviously illogical, but God is God and whatsoever He wills He does.

The Christian dialectic is this: “God loves me, God loves him: I love him.” If I love God, how can I not love those whom He loves? The word “almsgiving” means the charity of giving money, food, or other material goods to people living in poverty.

But not only material poverty: for if physical almsgiving is an obviously good thing, far more is giving spiritual sustenance to those lacking it. And the most-impooverished person among those near us is probably our spouse, our children, and our family members.

Amen.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Today is the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, named after the Gospel of this Sunday, the story Jesus gave about a Publican and a Pharisee who both go to the Temple to pray.

Last night, at Vespers, we opened a service book and began using it in our church services – the Lenten Triodion – only used during the seventy days before Pascha which includes the forty days of the Great Fast. We are not fasting – yet – but preparing ourselves for the Great Fast. And one of the first things the church tells us in this coming week is: “Don’t fast! Neither on Wednesday or Friday: so that we might not become like the Pharisee in today’s gospel, thinking that the fast saves us and thinking that prayer saves us. Remember, our Lord says, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

If we take a closer look at the Pharisee in today’s Gospel, we notice that he was a good man. He fasted regularly, went to the temple regularly, tithed regularly. But when he prayed that is all he talked about. For he says to God in his prayer, *“I thank you God that I’m not like other people, robbers, evildoers ... or even this Publican. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”*

Such a prayer is not pleasing to God Who distances Himself from evildoers. Many of the holy fathers teach us that humility is the mother of all virtues – whereas pride is the source of all sin. Humility opens the doors to our salvation. It was this virtue that adorned the heart of the Publican and not the Pharisee even though he had many good deeds.

Holy Scripture, both the Old and New Testament, are filled with examples of the dangers of pride. This is the reason the Church decided to give us this Gospel reading about humility to begin our preparation for Great Lent.

We need to be sober-minded and always aware of our sins. As Saint Nikolai (Velimirović) points out, God is more pleased when man numbers his sins and not his good deeds, because He is our Physician and comes to our bed and asks us our pains. Foolish is the man who conceals his pain and speaks to the Physician of his good health, but wise is the one who tells Him of all his pains. Saint John Chrysostom says that it is evil to sin, but the greater sin is to not to confess it is for we unless we speak it aloud, we will find no cure.

This is precisely the goal and aim of Great Lent. Yes, we are to fast and abstain from certain foods, but that is not the point – the point is to change and grow closer to God through self-denial and humility.

May the Lord strengthen us in our faith that we may approach the coming Lenten season with a humble heart.

Amen.

*Reverend Protopresbyter Milan Katanic
Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Petka, San Marcos, CA*

Synaxarion for the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

Sticheron of the Triodion

O Creator of all above and below,
as Thou receivest the thrice-holy hymn from the angels,
so also from mankind receive the Triodion.

Sticheron of the Publican and the Pharisee

He who lives like a Pharisee is far from the Church,
for Christ is received within, O ye humble of heart.

By the grace of God on this present day we begin the Triodion, the hymns of which were composed by many of our holy and God-bearing Fathers, inspired by the Holy Spirit according to their worthiness.

The first was the great author Saint Cosmas of Maiúma, who composed the three odes (symbolic of the Holy and Life-Creating Trinity) for the Great and Holy Week of the Passion of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ.

After him others of the Fathers, including Saints Theodore and Joseph of the Studite Monastery in Constantinople, following his zealous example, arranged the services of the other weeks of the Holy and Great Forty-day Fast, reserving them at first for the use of the Studite Monastery.

Furthermore, they composed and arranged hymns, seeking them, and collecting them from other books of the Fathers.

These Holy Fathers have provided that each day at Matins, three Lenten odes be chanted reflecting the character of this season. Thus, it is called the "Triódion," the period of "Three Odes."

At the Kanon of Matins eight odes (short hymns) are chanted from the Októechos book, which are arranged according to the eight tones for every day of the week. In addition, eight odes are chanted from the Menaíon book, arranged according to the twelve months for each calendar date. To these two sets of Kanon odes, three more are chanted from the Triódion book, arranged according to the ten weeks of the season for every day.

For it was our Holy Fathers' idea that through the entire Triodion would be commemorated in a concise form all God's benefits to us from the beginning, using it as a reminder for all of us that we were created by Him, and were exiled from Paradise through the tasting of the fruit, rejecting the commandment that was given to us for our knowledge, and we were cast out through the envy of the arch villain serpent and enemy, who was made to crawl for his arrogance.

That we remained cut off from the benefits of Paradise and were led by the devil.

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Continued from page 9 ☞ That the Son and Word of God, having suffered in His mercy, bowing the heavens, descended and made His abode in the Virgin and became man for our sake, showing us through His life the ascent into the heavens, through humility first of all, then fasting and the rejection of evil and through His other deeds.

That He suffered and rose from the dead, ascended once more into heaven, and sent down the Holy Spirit upon His holy disciples and Apostles, who all proclaimed Him to be the Son of God and the most-perfect God.

And that once more the divine Apostles acted through the grace of the most Holy Spirit and gathered all the saints from the ends of the earth through their preaching, filling the world on high, which was the intention of the Creator from the beginning.

Now the purpose of the Triodion intended by the Holy Fathers on these three present feasts of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Prodigal Son, and the Second Coming is a kind of preparatory lesson and stimulation to prepare ourselves for the spiritual labors of the Fast, having put aside our usual corrupt habits.

First, they present to us the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, and they call the week following precursory. For those who desire to go off to do military battle, first ascertain the time of the battle from the leaders, so that having cleaned and polished their weapons, and preparing well all their other matters, and having removed all obstacles from their path, they earnestly go forth to their labors, taking the necessary supplies.

Often before battle they tell anecdotes and tales and parables to incite their hearts to zeal, driving off idleness, fear, despair, and other inadequate feelings. So, the divine Fathers herald the coming fast against the armies of demons as a passion which holds fast our souls to cleanse ourselves of the poison accumulated over a long period of time.

Not yet possessing those benefits, let us strive to obtain them, and arming ourselves properly, so let us set off to the labors of the Fast.

Now the first weapon among the virtues is repentance and humility. And the temptation to attain the greatest humility is pride and arrogance.

So, they place before us first this present trustworthy parable from the Divine Gospel. It encourages us to shun the desire for the pride and arrogance of the Pharisee, and to cultivate the opposite desire of the Publican for humility and repentance.

For the greatest and most grievous passion is pride and arrogance, since this is how the Devil fell from the heavens before the morning star and was cast into darkness.

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Continued from page 10 ☩ Because of this Adam, the father of our race, was driven from Paradise through partaking of the fruit.

Through this example the Holy Fathers encourage all not to be proud of their successes, but always to be humble. For the Lord sets Himself against the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

Better a man who has sinned, if he knows that he has sinned and repents, than a man who has not sinned and thinks of himself as righteous.

For Christ said, “*I say to you that the Publican went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee.*” This parable reveals that no one should exalt himself, even though he has done good deeds, but rather should always be humble and pray from his heart to God, for even if he should fall into the most serious sin, salvation is not far off.

Through the prayers of all Thy holy hymnographers,

○ Christ our God, have mercy on us.

Amen.



The Sunday after the Sunday of Zacchaeus features the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. At Vespers the night before, the Triodion (the liturgical book of this season) is given to the chanter and the Triodion begins.

Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee who scrupulously observed the requirements of religion: he prayed, fasted, and contributed money to the Temple. These are very good things and should be imitated by anyone who loves God.

We who may not fulfill these requirements as well as did the Pharisee, should not feel entitled to criticize him for being faithful. His sin was in looking down on the Publican and feeling justified because of his external religious observances.

The second man was a Publican, a tax-collector who was despised by the people. He, however, displayed humility, and this humility justified him before God (*cf. Luke 18:14*).

The lesson to be learned is that we possess neither the Pharisee’s religious piety, nor the Publican’s repentance, through which we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ’s teaching, asking Him to be merciful to us, to deliver us from sin, and to lead us on the path of salvation.

This week, two weeks before the beginning of the Fast (on March 18 in 2024), as part of our preparation for Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha, the Church prescribes the reading of Saint Mark’s Gospel. From Monday to Friday the focus is on the end times, and the Savior’s death and burial.

Tone 8, Troparion (*Resurrection*)

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One. • Thou didst accept the three-day burial to free us from our sufferings. • O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee.

Tone 1, Troparion (*Feast of the Presentation*)

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of Grace. • From thee shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, • enlightening those who sat in darkness. • Rejoice and be glad, O righteous Elder, • thou didst accept in thine arms the Redeemer of our souls, • Who grants us the Resurrection.

Tone 8, Troparion of the Temple (*Midfeast of Pentecost*)

O Savior at the Middle of the Feast, • fill my thirsting soul with the waters of piety, as Thou didst cry to all: • “If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink.” • O Christ God, Fountain of our life, glory to Thee.

Tone 4, Kontakion of the Temple (*Midfeast of Pentecost*)

Christ God, the Creator and Master of all, • cried to all in the midst of the feast of the law: “Come and draw the water of immortality.” • We fall before Thee and faithfully cry: • “Grant us Thy mercies for Thou art the Fountain of our life.”

Tone 4, Kontakion (*from the Lenten Triodion*)

Gloria... Let us flee from the pride of the Pharisee. • Let us learn humility from the Publican's tears. • Let us cry to our Savior: • “Have mercy on us, • O only merciful One.”

Tone 1, Kontakion (*Feast of the Presentation*)

Both... By Thy Nativity Thou didst sanctify the Virgin's womb • and didst bless Simeon’s hands, Christ God. • Now Thou hast come and saved us through love. • Grant peace to all Orthodox Christians, • O only Lover of Man.

Prokeimena

Pray and make your vows before the Lord, our God.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

Instead of “It is truly meet...,” we sing:

O Virgin Theotokos, hope of all Christians, • protect, preserve, and save those who hope in thee. In the shadow and letter of the Law, • let us the faithful discern a figure: • every male [child] that opens the womb • is holy to God. • Therefore, we magnify the firstborn Word of the Father Who has no beginning, • the Son firstborn of a Mother who had not known man.



Евангелие

Два человека вошли в храм помолиться: один фарисей, а другой мытарь. Фарисей, став, молился сам в себе так: Боже! благодарю Тебя, что я не таков, как прочие люди, грабители, обидчики, прелюбодеи, или как этот мытарь: пощусь два раза в неделю, даю десятую часть из всего, что приобретаю. Мытарь же, стоя вдали, не смел даже поднять глаз на небо; но, ударя себя в грудь, говорил: Боже! будь милостив ко мне грешнику! Сказываю вам, что сей пошёл оправданным в дом свой более, нежели тот: ибо всякий, возвышающий сам себя, унижен будет, а унижающий себя возвысится (Лк. 18, 10-14).



Митрополит Антоний (Храповицкий)

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.

Фарисей благодарит за сохранение в чистоте; фарисей не осужден - сказано только, что мытарь более оправдан. Обыкновенно проповедники говорят, что фарисей был великим грешником и что он лгал, говоря о своих добродетелях. Мы так плохо о нём не думаем: он не лгал, и у него есть несомненные добродетели.

В притче высказана мысль о том, что покаяние имеет большую ценность, чем многие подвиги, и что последние имеют ценность только будучи связаны с покаянием. Поэтому три четверти наших молитв - покаянные.

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Ты, христианин, осуждающий фарисея с его подвигами и присоединяющийся к восхвалению мытаря, - имеешь ли ты мытареву покаяние или у тебя холодное сердце и в нём нет вопля мытарева - «Боже, милостив буди мне, грешному».

Аминь.

Митрополит Антоний Сурожский

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.



Мы привыкли презирать и осуждать фарисея: нам кажется, что сегодняшнее Евангелие даёт нам на это право – он будто осуждён Самим Христом. Но мы забываем, что надменная праведность фарисея стоила дорого ему и подобным ему людям. Это были люди подвига и убеждения; по коротким словам, которые о нем сказаны в Евангелии, он постится дважды в неделю, то есть воздаёт Богу не только то, что должен бы воздавать по закону, но больше, сверх меры: он даёт Богу от своего усердия. И одновременно он даёт значительную часть своего дохода нуждающимся, то есть и к людям тоже он обращен каким-то, хоть и суровым, подвигом жизни. Поэтому нельзя легко судить о нём. Фарисеи были люди, которые были готовы понести тяготу своего подвига; но разбивался этот подвиг о правду Божию на том, что из своего подвига они черпали сознание какой-то мнимой праведности, а любви не достигали.

Вот он вошел в храм, не остановился у притолоки, не вспомнил, что находится в храме Бога Живого, что нет твари, которая не должна бы пасть перед Ним в трепете, в ужасе, в любви. Он пришел твердым шагом и занял свое место в храме – он на это место «имеет право»; он живет достойно, по правилам Церкви, и потому стоит он там, где имеет право стоять.

Разве это не страшно и не осуждающе похоже на нас? Как часто мы знаем, что у нас есть перед Богом, среди людей место и что есть у нас место, я не говорю – в вещественном храме, но в том таинственном, незримом храме, который есть мироздание, трепетно собранное вокруг Живого Бога своего. Мы тоже часто думаем: «Мое место – тут, а его – там».

А «там» стоял человек, который по суду людскому действительно не имел никакого пути вперед, в передние ряды праведников ☞ 3

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2 ☞ Господних. Он был собирателем податей, но как он отличался от современных! Он просто был прислужником оккупантов-римлян, которые поработили народ израильский, всячески его притесняли и искали в его же среде таких людей, которые будут только заниматься побором, собирать их дань. И конечно, такие люди были всеми ненавидимы, потому что законом их жизни было вымогательство, была твёрдость, была жестокость, была беспощадность.

Но одному, видно, этот мытарь научился в той страшной, жестокой жизни, которую он вел среди себе подобных и среди жертв ожесточения людского. Он научился, что не выжить человеку в страшном человеческом обществе, если хотя бы на мгновение не будет приостанавливаться закон, если хотя бы на мгновение не будет проявляться жалость, милосердие. Если всё будет идти по писанному, если всё будет делаться так, как по праву можно поступать, то ни один человек не уцелеет.

И вот он стал у притолоки, зная, что по правде людской и по правде Божией он заслуживает ту же беспощадную жестокость, какую он сам применяет изо дня в день; и он стал там, бия себя в грудь, ибо знал, что заслужить никакого милосердия нельзя, – милосердие не заслуживается, никакого милосердия купить нельзя, ни быть достойным его нельзя – его только вымолить можно; оно может прийти как чудо, как непонятное, совершенно неожиданное чудо, когда праведность склоняется перед грехом, когда милосердие вдруг прорывается там, где должна бы проявиться правда – высокая, беспощадная правда. Он стоит весь в грехе своем, не смея войти в область правды Божией, потому что там для него нет прощения, а стоит он у притолоки, надеясь, что до края этого храма, до края праведности и через край её перельется милость, жалость, сострадание, милосердие, что с ним случится незаслуженное и невозможное.

И потому что он верит в это, потому что жизнь его именно этому научила – что случается невозможное, и только невозможное делает жизнь людскую возможной, – он стоит, и до него доходит Божие прощение. Христос нам говорит, что этот ушёл более оправданным, чем другой. Фарисей не был просто осуждён: до часа смертного можно надеяться на прощение, и он был праведен, он был труженик, он вкладывал усилие души и тела в праведность свою. Она была бесплодна, из неё не высекалась даже и искра сострадания и любви – и, однако, это была праведность... А неправедность получила прощение.

Вот, подумаем об этом; подумаем о том, во-первых, являемся ли мы хотя бы фарисеями, есть ли в нас вообще какая-то правда, правда ☞ 4

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3 ☞ перед людьми, с доброделанием, правда перед Богом – то есть отдаем ли мы Ему должное, то, на что Он просто имеет право? А потом поставим перед собой вопрос: лишённые даже и праведности фарисея, не являемся ли мы такими же, как и он, безлюбными, бессердечными, мёртвыми душой? Как мы смотрим на ближнего – в храме, вне храма, в жизни, в семье, на работе, на улице, в газете, везде: единичного ближнего и коллективного ближнего? Как мы на них смотрим, как мы о них судим, не имея опоры даже в истинной, хотя и мёртвой, праведности фарисея?

Аминь.



Митрополит Антоний (Храповицкий)

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Аминь.

The Children's Word

"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them, for to such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Mark 10:14

Sunday, February 9, 2025

Volume 13, Issue 6

Cleaning up



Imagine your parents telling you to clean up your room. What would you do? Would you put everything back into its right spot? Would you hang up your clothes and put your toys away? Or...would you think about hiding the mess? You could stuff your things in the closet so your room would look good on the outside...and maybe your parents wouldn't even notice!

In today's Gospel reading, we hear a story about two men who were doing a different kind of cleaning—cleaning the heart and soul! These two men went to go pray. One of them tried to show off, telling God all the great things he had done. The other one asked God, "Be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Now, which one of these two men do you think was really trying to clean his heart? Which one really wanted to be right with God? The second one, right? This one was honest with God. The first man wasn't really cleaning his heart. He just wanted to look good on the outside...and maybe he thought other people (or even God!) wouldn't notice.

Let's remember: God always notices how we pray. When we pray like the humble man in the story, then we're really cleaning our hearts...not just hiding it in the closet!

WORD SEARCH

Can you find these words in the jumble?

Heart
Humility
Martyr
Pharisee
Prayer
Publican
Rome
Secret
Temple
Valentine

E	O	K	M	N	O	W	X	B	H	R	R	W	V	J
Y	M	A	G	A	E	E	C	E	X	U	E	Y	O	B
L	U	O	G	C	G	O	A	W	R	E	M	V	G	U
S	Q	R	R	I	X	R	Q	W	S	V	T	E	V	M
B	T	A	Y	L	T	A	P	I	N	M	X	A	S	K
D	F	T	U	B	G	P	R	W	J	K	L	F	E	Y
R	S	C	X	U	W	A	Y	F	J	E	M	O	C	P
W	N	P	F	P	H	V	M	W	N	F	Z	H	R	W
B	H	H	H	P	J	P	E	T	D	M	I	F	E	K
H	V	Z	Y	P	G	F	I	S	J	N	S	V	T	V
A	W	U	W	A	R	N	E	L	P	M	E	T	J	R
Q	O	B	V	T	E	A	W	T	R	Y	T	R	A	M
H	U	M	I	L	I	T	Y	G	V	Q	U	C	M	A
L	V	Y	N	L	H	G	N	E	F	Y	S	I	Q	M
M	G	Q	K	C	O	B	J	K	R	T	D	Q	T	O

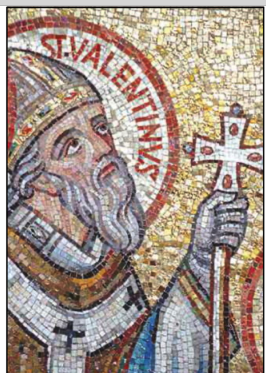
WHAT'S IN THE ICON?

Here is an icon of St. Valentine of Rome, the saint we celebrate in July!

You can see he is holding the Gospel. He is holding a cross too— that shows he was a martyr. He died for his Christian faith!



VALENTINE'S DAY IN JULY? ST. VALENTINE OF ROME



This week, you'll probably have lots of heart-shaped candy, flowers, and balloons, but did you know Valentine's Day is a feastday in our Orthodox Church? You and your school class will have your parties on February 14th, but our church celebrates this great saint on July 6th!

Who is St. Valentine, and why do we think of hearts and flowers and cards and love when we hear his name? Well, St. Valentine lived hundreds of years ago, in the 3rd century, in the city of Rome. We don't know a lot about him, but here is one story about the saint.

Valentine lived during a time when many people lived as secret Christians. They had to hide their faith because if they didn't, they would be hurt or killed by the emperor. One emperor, Emperor Claudius, made a rule that said that soldiers could not be married. He wanted the soldiers to be loyal to him, not to their wives and children.

St. Valentine, who was a priest, did not think that was fair. He secretly performed marriages for young Christians who wanted to get married. When Emperor Claudius found out about all this, he was furious! Before long, this evil emperor sentenced Valentine to die. St. Valentine was a great Christian, who knew what true love really is. He was happy that he would finally be with Christ in Heaven.

We celebrate St. Valentine in July, but we can remember him this week too!

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The Publican and the Pharisee



The Children's Word is a weekly bulletin for Orthodox Christian young people. Copyright 2025 Alexandra Houck. Email is orthodoxchildrensword (at) gmail.com. Find it each week at myocn.net.