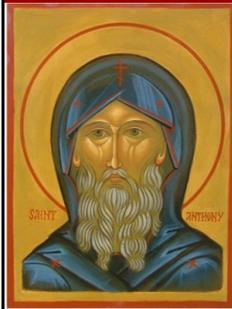


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE

Forefeast of the Presentation of the Lord

1 February 2015

TONE 1 — Beginning of the Lenten Triodion. Presentation of the Lord (transferred from 2 February). Martyr Tryphon of Campsada near Apamea in Syria (250); Martyr Perpetua of Carthage (202-203). Ven. Peter Galata, Hermit, near Antioch in Syria (429). Ven. Vendemianus (Bendemianus), Hermit, of Bithynia (ca. 512). Ven. Brigid (Brigid) of Ireland (523).

FIRST ANTIPHON

My heart overflows with a good word: I speak my poem to the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. (R:) Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! Grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee forever. (R:) Glory... Now and ever... (R:)

SECOND ANTIPHON

Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. Bend Thy bow, and prosper, and reign. (R:) O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead: save us who sing to Thee, "Alleluia"! Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the scepter of Thy kingdom is a righteous scepter. (R:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten ...)

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

The Lord has made known His salvation; He has revealed His justice in the sight of all nations. O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia!

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 1): While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For this cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O Giver of life: "Glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ! Glory to Thy kingdom! Glory to Thy providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind!"

TROPARION OF THE MEETING OF THE LORD (Tone 4): Rejoice thou who art full of grace, O Virgin Theotokos! For from thee hath risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those in darkness. Rejoice thou also, O righteous Elder, as thou receivest in thine arms the Redeemer of our souls, Who also granteth to us the Resurrection!

KONTAKION FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE (*To the special melody "On this day Thou hast appeared"*): Let us flee the Pharisee's conceited vaunting; let us learn the Publican's humility, and cry with groans unto the Savior: Thou Who alone art swiftly reconciled, be gracious unto us.

KONTAKION FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD (Tone 1): Thou, O Christ God, Who by Thy birth didst sanctify the Virgin's womb and, as is meet, didst bless Simeon's arms, and didst also come to save us: preserve Thy fold in wars, and confirm them whom Thou didst love, for Thou alone art the Lover of mankind!

SPECIAL THEOTOKION:

O Theotokos, thou hope of all Christians; keep and shelter and preserve them that set their hope in thee. Let us magnify, O believers, the first-born Son, the eternal Word of the Father, First-born of a Mother who knew no man; for we have beheld in the shadow of the law and the Scriptures a sign, that every first-born male that openeth the womb is called holy to God.

TODAY'S EPISTLE READING For the Feast of the Lord's Presentation

*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He hath regarded the humility of His servant.*

The Reading from the Epistle to the Hebrews

(Heb 7:7-17) Brethren, it is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. Here tithes are received by mortal men; there, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, "Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

The feast known as the “Meeting” or “Presentation” of the Lord is one of the oldest feasts of the Christian Church. But who is presented? The Lord—Jesus Christ—as a baby, only 40 days old. According to the Law of Moses, each family “present” its first-born son to the Temple: that is, the child was consecrated to God, in the same way that the first yield of the crop was presented to God—a solemn way of thanking God for His gifts, and for asking His blessing upon one's efforts. But that which has been offered up to God has thereby been made sacred (it is “consecrated”) and fit to remain there, in the holy place. How can a consecrated offering—the child—be returned to “regular” life, outside the Temple? Parents would “buy it back” by offering instead a young lamb, or, for people who could not afford it, two turtledoves. And this is precisely what Mary the Theotokos and the Righteous Joseph did (incidentally, they were quite poor, so they brought turtledoves).

The feast is also called “Meeting of the Lord.” Who “meets” Him? Symeon, an old priest, and the old prophetess Anna. It is on this occasion that Symeon bursts out in Spirit-inspired song, with words that the Church has retained for its prayer: “Lord, let now Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to enlighten the gentiles and the Glory of Thy people Israel.”

The old man had received a promise from God, that he would not die before seeing with his very eyes, the One who bring “salvation.” And, indeed, he confesses: “my eyes have seen” ... Seen what? God’s salvation, namely the Glory of God, the object of Israel’s worship. “The Glory” is God’s living manifestation to the patriarchs and prophets of old—the fiery cloud that called Moses from the bush, and led Israel out of Egypt, and covered the mountain at the giving of the Law ...

But what Symeon saw was more astonishing: God’s Glory in-the-flesh, under the humble appearance of a little baby! And the prophetess Anna also, “spoke of Him to all those who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38) because she understood the same. The icon of the Feast shows her holding a scroll which reads: “This Child has established Heaven and earth.”

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 18:10-14) **The Lord spoke this parable: "Two men went up into the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a Publican (a tax collector). The Pharisee stood and prayed thus within himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers—or even like this Publican. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.' But the Publican, standing afar off, would not even lift up 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, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

It does not take a degree in Theology to know that it is much easier to spot the sins of people around us than it is to see our own sins. The Lord once put this very sharply: “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” And now He offers the same teaching by means of a parable. Let’s consider the characters in the story: God, the Pharisee, and the Publican. With the publican—that is, the tax collector—things are pretty clear. Any decent person despised tax-collectors, because they were not only merciless, but also corrupt and abusive. They extorted higher taxes than was actually demanded, they shamelessly demanded bribes, and generally satisfied their insatiable greed by any means available. As for the Pharisees—the specialist of the Scriptures, the theologian, as it were—people would usually respect

them as dedicated to God and concerned with leading a pure life. When these two people interact, everyone would expect that the Pharisee should chastise the tax-collector for his sinful lifestyle.

But the two appear in front of God, and so the truth of their heart is revealed and looks quite surprising. As the Lord says, **it is the tax-collector who returned home justified, not the theologian!** Why so? The fact is that we are not reading a parable about a “good tax-collector” and an “evil Pharisee.” Wasn’t the tax-collector sinful? Of course he was! And wasn’t the Pharisee fasting twice a week (a good example for us!) and giving 10% of his income (a good example for us!)? Of course he was!

Note that, in the parable, God remains silent. It would seem that He is not particularly attentive to the virtues of the Pharisee and the vices of the tax-collector. Indeed, according to Scripture, **“The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7).** And it is there, in the heart, that the truth is revealed! The tax-collector, despite his many sins, finds salvation because his heart breaks with humility and repentance; the Pharisee, however, with all his fasting and tithing according to the Law, condemns himself by despising and condemning his brother.

We are reading this parable because we are approaching the period of Lent. May this divine Gospel lesson find not only eyes to see and ears to hear, but also hearts to receive it!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: memorial Trisagion for Richard Michaels.

Sunday school resumes. Teens are asked to read the Thanksgiving Prayers after Communion, and then meet (shortly) with Fr. Bogdan.

Wednesday, February 4, 6:15-8 pm: Fellowship and Study Group in Cranberry. We will be finish reading and discussing Saint Ignatius of Antioch’s Epistle to the Ephesians. The text is available on the parish website (under “News and Current Events”).

Next Sunday, February 8: memorial Trisagion for Ileana Șerbănescu's grandmother, Petruta.

Sunday, February 17 (Sunday of the Last Judgment— "Meatfare"): Pan-Orthodox services and Pre-Lenten Luncheon at Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Church. Matins 9:15, Divine Liturgy 10 am.

House blessings. Fr. Bogdan will be available on Saturdays and Sundays afternoons and evenings. Please email or call to schedule a visit!

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Bill and Ann, George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Jim, Tony, Samantha, Luke (relatives of Dollie's), Norma, Victoria (Frank’s mother), Richard (Johns), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Sam, Karen (Joanna’s mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Dolores (Bingham), Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, John, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Benjamin, John, Janet, Craig, Christy (relatives of Jean); Yvonne (Ben’s mother)

Ron, catechumen; Shea and Katie, Timothy and Caroline – seeking for the true faith.

DEPARTED: Rick, Phyllis (Seba’s husband and sister), Angeliki, Metropolitan Philip, Joe and David Sipos; Bill (Georgia's father-in-law), Glenn (Jean's grandson); Stella, Edmund (Ed’s uncle), Richard, Dolores Patricia (Thompson), Leatrice (Totin), Ed (Joanna’s grandfather), Joseph (Rose’s father), Fred (Dollie’s uncle), Bob (Diane’s father), Michael, Gabriel, Hilda (Chris Abraham’s mother).

From Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent*

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee: HUMILITY

On the eve of the "*Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee*", on Saturday at Vespers, the liturgical book of the Lenten season—the *Triodion*—makes its first appearance and texts from it are added to the usual hymns and prayers of the weekly resurrection service. They develop the next major aspect of repentance: *humility*.

If there is a moral quality almost completely disregarded and even denied today, it is indeed humility. The culture in which we live constantly instills in us the sense of pride, of self-glorification, and of self-righteousness. It is built on the assumption that man can achieve anything by himself and it even pictures God as the one who all the time "gives credit" for man's achievements and good deeds. Humility-- be it individual or corporate, ethnic or national-- is viewed as a sign of weakness, as something unbecoming a real man. Even our churches-- are they not imbued with that same spirit as the Pharisee? Do we not want our every contribution, every "good deed," all that we do "for the Church" to be acknowledged, praised, publicized?

The Lenten season begins then by a quest, a prayer for humility which is the beginning of true repentance. For repentance, above everything else, is *a return to the genuine order of things*, the restoration of the right vision. It is, therefore, rooted in humility, and humility-- the divine and beautiful humility-- is its fruit and end. "Let us avoid the high-flown speech of the Pharisee," says the *Kontakion* of this day, "and *learn the majesty* of the Publican's humble words..."

We are at the gates of repentance and at the most solemn moment of the Sunday vigil. After Christ's Resurrection and appearance have been announced—"having beheld the Resurrection"—we sing for the first time the *troparia* which will accompany us throughout the entire Lent:

Open to me the gates of repentance, O Giver of Life, for my spirit rises early to pray towards thy holy temple, bearing the temple of my body all defiled. But in Thy compassion, purify me by the loving kindness of Thy mercy!

Lead me on the paths of salvation, O Mother of God, for I have profaned my soul with shameful sins, and have wasted my life in laziness. But by your intercessions, deliver me from all impurity.

When I think of the many evil things I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble at the fearful day of judgment. But trusting in Thy living kindness, like David I cry to Thee: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy.