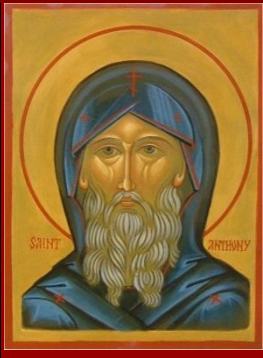


# SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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## SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE

9 February 2014

*TONE 6 —Beginning of the Lenten Triodion. Leavetaking of the Presentation of the Lord. Hieromartyrs Marcellus, Bishop of Sicily, Philagrius, Bishop of Cyprus, and Pancratius, Bishop of Taormina (1st c.); Martyr Nicephorus of Antioch in Syria (257).*

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

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 8): From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three-day burial, that Thou mightest deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our Resurrection: O Lord, glory to Thee!

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!

TROPARION OF ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT (Tone 4, Russian): Like the zealous Elijah thou didst become, and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. A dweller in the wilderness, thou didst steady the world by prayer. O Father Anthony, intercede with Christ our God for our souls' salvation.

**Glory... Now and ever...**

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.

#### **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.

#### ***Remember in your prayers***

LIVING: Seba, Richard (Johns), Bill, Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Richard (Michaels), Sam, Karen (Joanna's mother), Victoria (Frank's mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Dolores (Bingham), Angelica, Karyn, Ignatius and Amy, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei and Nyoka, Benjamin, John, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother).

DEPARTED: Nicolae, 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, Eugenia (Cristina's godmother).

## FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT: PATRIARCH ABRAHAM (1)

**Genesis 12:1-4** *The LORD said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you." Abram went as the LORD directed him . . .*

**Joshua 24:2-3** *Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: In times past your ancestors, down to Terah, father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and served other gods. But I brought your father Abraham from the region beyond the River and led him through the entire land of Canaan..."*

## TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

*Pray and make your vows unto the Lord your God. In Judah is God known.*

*The Reading is from the Second Epistle of Saint Paul to Timothy*

(2 Tim 3:10-15) Timothy my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconion, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But you continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

We should keep in mind Saint Paul's clear statement: **all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.** In other words, Christianity is not for weak souls, not for the lazy, not for the cowards. Living as Christians, we are in the business of working out the dawn of the Kingdom of God in us; and as long as we are still in the interim period between the Resurrection of the Lord and His second coming, this new creation that dawns in us beginning with our baptism, remains *other than* and *opposed to* the fallen world in which we live. So, a Christian is a walking paradox: a fallen, frail, sinful human, yet one who already

tastes of (and increasingly embodies) the new life of the Kingdom; a life that withers and will inevitably die, yet a life that already anticipates the resurrection.

From the very beginning, the Christian message has been mocked, attacked, suppressed. From the very beginning, it was clear that there is intense and hateful resistance against the Gospel, and that this resistance ultimately can be traced to the Adversary, Satan. **“Indeed,”** the Apostle confirms, **“all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”** For us today, it is less beneficial to focus on enemies and dangers “out there” lurking to oppress and persecute us for being Christians. **“All who desire to live a godly life”** know well that the first and most dreadful battle is happening *within*.

Christianity is not for the lazy, not for weak souls, and not for cowards: let us redouble our efforts in fighting the good fight, the fight against the tyranny of our own sins and weaknesses and failings.

## TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

### *The Reading is 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 pot is calling the kettle black.” An Arabic proverb says, “The camel cannot see the crookedness of its own neck”; and in Romania, “the potsherd laughs at the cracked pot.”

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 slowly preparing to enter 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

- This Sunday:**
- memorial Trisagion for Ileana Șerbănescu's grandmother, Petruta.
  - Sunday school resumes. Teens are asked to read the Thanksgiving Prayers after Communion, and then meet (shortly) with Fr. Bogdan.
  - meeting of the parish council

### **Next Sunday, February 16**

- Bill and Ann Thomas celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary. Please join us in congratulating them, and stay on for the meal they prepare.

**Sunday, February 23** (Sunday of the Last Judgment— "Meatfare"): Pan-Orthodox Divine Liturgy and Pre-Lenten Luncheon at St. Andrew Orthodox Church, 10 AM.

**House blessings.** Fr. Bogdan is available on Saturdays and Sundays afternoons and evenings.

## 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.*