

# ***SUNDAY BULLETIN***

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church, 971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

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**SUNDAY, February 21, 2021**

Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

Holy Martyr Tryphon (Forefeast of the Meeting of our Lord)

Epistle 2. Timothy 3, 10-15. Gospel Luke 18:10-14

## **The Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee**

Luke 18:10-14

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon 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 every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (KJV)

Today believers have the opportunity to seek unity with the Lord God. This opportunity exists when the believer becomes like the publican in the current Gospel. The publican humbly sought the Lord's mercy.

The publican did not exalt himself. He did not boast nor tell God all the good he had done. The publican recognized and took responsibility for his own sinfulness.

Courage, faith and trust in the Lord God are necessary to come before God and acknowledge personal sinfulness. Every person commits sins. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is perfect.

When believers acknowledge personal sins, repent and seek the Lord's mercy, new beginnings in life occur. The Pharisee boasted to God about what he considered to be good. The Pharisee looked down upon the publican.

Love for the publican was absent in the Pharisee. Acknowledging personal sin, humility and repentance were absent in the Pharisee. The Pharisee did not seek to change and lead a more God-pleasing life.

The Pharisee determined he had done enough for God. The Pharisee did not view God-pleasing growth as a continuous process until departure from this life. Christians are to seek growth from Holy Baptism until departure from this life. The possibility to grow in Christ and be renewed in Christ exists throughout life. The Holy Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians describes the unlimited change possible for believers.

The Holy Apostle Paul stated: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18)

Change by the Spirit of the Lord requires humility and personal understanding of sin. Change in the believer to the image of the Lord necessitates sin being expelled from personal life.

The publican desired the Lord's mercy. The publican wanted his life to change and become pleasing to the Lord. Arrogance and pride were absent in the publican. The publican was sorry for his sins.

God's goodness and mercy are everywhere. The humble see God at work in everyday life and at every moment of life. The arrogant and prideful Pharisees see only themselves and what they consider their own goodness.

The Pharisee was blinded to his own sin. The Pharisee was content with the way he lived. The Pharisee did not see the need to change. His heart was hardened and his mind was closed.

The publican felt in his soul the need for change. The publican yearned for the Lord's mercy to make a difference in his life. The publican's yearning for God was recognized.

The Gospel is clear in saying the publican is the example to follow to lead a God pleasing life. God's Holy Church prescribes this Gospel to be read each year as Great Lent approaches.

Believers are to look carefully within the heart, mind and soul. Pharisaic attitudes are to be immediately rejected with God's help. The humility of the publican is to become real in the believer's heart, mind and soul.

Repentance involves a change in the heart, mind and soul. Love of God increases as the believer becomes more aware of God in personal and daily life.

Room must exist in the heart, mind and soul to see, love and experience God.

Great Lent redirects the believer to a life more pleasing to God. The Lenten journey in God's Holy Church is a journey of love and of the life in Christ. The Lenten journey is gentle, life-changing and life-renewing.

Believers are to welcome the desired change in the spirit of Great Lent. Joy is manifested and experienced among believers seeking to grow in Christ. The publican is the example of an open heart and love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Worship in God's Holy Church is filled with pleas for the Lord's mercy. Believers actively participating in the worship immerse the heart, mind and soul in the pleas for mercy.

Desiring God's mercy and the washing away of personal sins has a place in every moment of life. Everyday believers commit sins and benefit from repenting. New beginnings are always possible in Jesus Christ.

God's goodness, mercy and love are plentiful. The humble in heart and mind yearn for the peace that comes from repentance. Care of the soul is of paramount importance in the serious believer.

Today is the day to join with the publican in seeking God's mercy. Everyday seek God's mercy. Be grateful for the opportunity to repent and begin anew at every moment of life. Be grateful to the loving, forgiving and merciful God.

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The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Afterfeast of the Meeting of the Lord. Great-martyr Theodore Stratelates. February 8/21. 2021.

Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

**Following is a letter written by our Father Dragan to His Grace Bishop Irinej, our St Nicholas Parish and is posted on the Diocese web page:**

Faith, hope, and love in the Lord seem to make up for all the shortcomings and heal.

With the blessing and paternal love in Christ, by His Grace Bishop Irinej, I was appointed the new parish priest of St. Nicholas of Myra in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

Although I came to this community for the first time, I felt love and welcome, a welcome that exudes Eucharistic love in which we have all known each other in the Lord for a long time, as brothers and sisters and companions of His saving Sacrifice that unites us and makes us the Church! Gathered with an open heart in which their temple is located and all those who approach it with faith, they made me have the impression that it was one big family that was entrusted to me and that hugged me. The experience of the Kingdom of Heaven in which everyone rejoices in each other and greets each other with love.

Also, I must say that nostalgia for the previous priest, Fr. Milan Dragović, but out of love and obedience to the Episcopal blessing, they accepted everything with love and humility, as true faithful children of the Church of Christ, which they are!

Love, welcome, and support at every step that lasts constantly, is really an educational moment where I can be ashamed and from that shame, I learn that I need to give myself even more in the service of God and this wonderful community. Also, I am very grateful to God that I was convinced once again in action how wonderful obedience to the Church of Christ and the Blessing of Her Bishop is, without which the community would not be a community. Life in the Church is life through blessings, with blessings, and in blessings, it is a confirmation of unity that enables the community to survive, for love to multiply, even when it seems difficult to us! Because where there is love, there is also the Church, because Christ is there! Christ is not there where hatred dwells, no matter how great it is, even if it could not be seen. Our freedom in which we live is a blessing of the Church!

On this occasion, I would like to thank His Grace Bishop Irinej and all the faithful children of this parish who showed me love and trust in me and my family! May God grant you many years!

Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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**Mnogaja ljeta Father Dragan, Popadija Vladanka and Petar!**  
**With Love from your St Nicholas Parish**

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