

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
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The Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee
(02.25.2024.)

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)**

Concern for the soul increases with the arrival of the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee. Great Lent is drawing near. The focus on personal sinfulness and repentance increases.

Each person is a sinner. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is perfect. The Church offers believers the way to reject sin in our lives and begin anew. Jesus Christ is the way to overcome sin and begin anew in life.

The present Gospel of the Publican and Pharisee compares two approaches to sin. The Pharisee saw sin as existing in others. The Pharisee was proud of himself. He was blind to his own sinfulness.

The publican knew deep within himself he was a sinner. The publican wanted mercy from Jesus Christ because of his sins. He prayed the simple prayer seeking mercy.

The Church teaches the prayer of the publican as being greatly effective. The publican's prayer has become well-known as The Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ Son of God have mercy on me a sinner."

When recited regularly with honesty and sincerity, The Jesus Prayer is greatly beneficial. The Jesus Prayer can be said at any time during the day or night and at any location. The Jesus Prayer is effective when said aloud or silently.

The publican took responsibility for his sins. He did not look negatively toward others. He simply wanted to correct his own life. The Pharisee did not seek change. He was satisfied with himself. The Pharisee wanted approval from God.

Listeners to the present Gospel know whether they are like the Pharisee or the publican. The present Gospel intends change in believers. Acknowledging personal sin is the first step in getting rid of the sin.

Each person coming to Church decides whether to learn more about the life in Christ and how to become more Christ-like. The Church is where to unite with Christ and to perfect the life in Christ.

Each person has a life-long battle with sin that requires being fought. Believers commit themselves to following Jesus Christ from the time of Baptism until departure from this life.

Sin becomes a part of each life and must be dealt with if the person is to enter the Kingdom of God and experience eternal life. Constant care of the soul is always important.

The Jesus Prayer offers a direct connection with Jesus Christ. The publican in his demeanor taught how to approach Jesus Christ. The publican was humble and contrite. He made his sin known to Jesus and sought mercy.

Fighting sin requires the strength and mercy of Jesus Christ. The publican realized he needed Jesus' mercy and forgiveness to get rid of his sin. The publican's humble and honest approach to Christ was to his benefit.

Believers decide whether to remain focused throughout life on seeking the Kingdom of God. Continuous and serious prayer keeps believers on the narrow path to the Kingdom.

Too often believers depart from the path to the Kingdom and engage in sin. Committing sins may be voluntary or may come about unwittingly. Living in ways pleasing to Jesus Christ is necessary in caring for the soul.

Repentance is the way to begin anew in Christ. Rejecting sin and embracing Christ has a place in each day of life. Love for Christ grows as the believer strengthens the daily relationship with Christ.

Prayer facilitates the love of Christ and following the way of Christ. The present Gospel and each Gospel lesson is a way to unite and be reunited with Christ. Focusing on the sins of others and living like the Pharisee are perilous to the soul.

Growth in Christ is expected and joyful. Beginning anew in Christ advances the quality of life. The publican experienced newness in Christ. The publican benefitted from Christ's mercy and love.

Jesus loves each person. Jesus offers the way out of the life in sin. Jesus offers the way to the Heavenly Kingdom. Believers begin the journey at baptism. Sin derails the believer unless repentance takes place.

The Church proclaims the Gospel lesson on the Publican and the Pharisees each year for believers to correct their lives while there is time. Being like the Pharisee and putting off repentance is perilous to the soul.

Seeking Christ's mercy is the way to directly experience Christ's love. When sin is forgiven. Jesus Christ's love is keenly felt. Being a sinner is perilous to the soul.. Failing to repent is dangerous.

Thank God for the Gospel lesson on the Publican and the Pharisee. Thank God that Great Lent is approaching. Now is the time to think seriously about care of the soul. Now is the time to repent, seek God's mercy and experience God's love.

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. St. Meletius, Archbishop of Antioch.
February 12/25, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

The Great Blessing of Water and the Home

The Great Blessing of Water in our homes takes place after the Feast of Theophany, the Baptism of Christ, bringing the holy water & prayer in which Christ was baptized to our homes, as a blessing upon our families.

Traditionally, in most Orthodox parishes, the priest personally visits all his parishioners each year to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with the newly sanctified water of Theophany (January 19).

We also bring the blessed water to our homes to use throughout the year to bless our homes and to drink whether we are ill or as part of our daily prayer life.

"There are many occasions in family life when a sip of holy water can help to remind us of the blessing that was given 'to bestow sanctification', 'unto healing of soul and body', 'to be a fountain welling forth unto life eternal', as the priest prayed in the litany of Epiphany day."

Weaving Christ into Our Lives

The blessing of homes by these holy waters maintains the spiritual association between the 'family church' and the parish, as well as again providing for the sharing of God's spiritual gifts. ... This annual blessing is not as elaborate as the blessing of the new dwelling, but because of this it should not be overlooked, for it is in this way that the grace of God is extended to individual dwellings.

When the children are present, they have the opportunity to see the parish priest in a different and personal situation. If the priest permits, they can lead the way through the house, or hold a candle. They can show him their rooms or pets or favorite toys. They receive a blessing with water. For children, the house blessing shows the connection of the Church to the home. This is a perfect time to introduce your small children to having their bedrooms blessed as a 'shield of armor' to protect them when they sleep and all the fears they may have as children do so often.

In Summary

What does it mean to ask God to bless something? All things in the world have been spoiled right along with us. God must bless His world again in order for it to be the way that He wants it to be. For this reason God sent His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to the world: to bless everyone and everything that He made, to make all things good again. When the priest comes to

bless our homes, he asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing.

***What a wonderful way to begin the New Year!
Schedule your Visit with Fr. Dragan Vukovic directly
by calling your parish priest 814-244-4063
God bless you all!***

Learn: Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee

Introduction

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is the first Sunday of a three-week period prior to the commencement of Great Lent. It marks the beginning of a time of preparation for the spiritual journey of Lent, a time for Orthodox Christians to draw closer to God through worship, prayer, fasting, and acts of charity. It is also on this day that the Triodion is introduced, a liturgical book that contains the services from this Sunday, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), to Great and Holy Saturday.

Biblical Story

The name for this Sunday is taken from the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ found in Luke 18:10-14. This is the story of two men, one a Pharisee, a member of a Jewish sect known for its diligent observance of the Law, and the other a Publican, a government official charged with the responsibility of collecting taxes.

Both men enter the temple, and the Pharisee stands openly and prays, thanking God that he is not like other men, specifically extortioners, the unjust, adulterers, “or even this tax collector” (v. 11). He then begins to list his religious accomplishments by stating, “I fast twice a week, and I give tithes of all that I possess” (v. 12).

In direct contrast to the pride of the Pharisee, the Publican goes to a place where he will not be noticed by others and beats his breast saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” (v. 13).

Having told this story, Jesus affirms that it was the Publican who returned home justified and forgiven rather than the Pharisee. He states, “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (v. 14).

The theme of this parable is repentance. Repentance is the door through which we enter Lent, the starting-point of the journey to Pascha. To repent signifies far more than self-pity or futile regret over things done in the past. The Greek term *metanoia* means “change of mind.” To repent is to be renewed, to be transformed in our inward viewpoint, to attain a fresh way of looking at our relationship with God and with others. The fault of the Pharisee is that he has no desire to change his outlook; he is complacent, self-satisfied, and so he allows no place for God to act within him. The Gospel depicts him as a man that is pleased only with himself who thinks that he has complied with all of the requirements of religion. But in his pride, he has falsified the meaning of true religion and faith. He has reduced these to external observations, measuring his piety by the amount of money he gives.



The Publican, on the other hand, truly longs for a “change of mind.” He humbles himself, and his humility justifies him before God. He becomes, in the words of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3), “poor in spirit.” He acknowledges that he is a sinner, and he knows that salvation is only found in the mercy of God. Here we find an example of true humility, an essential aspect of repentance. A “change of mind” and the transformation of our lives can only happen when we humble ourselves before God, acknowledge our willingness to turn from sin, and receive His grace into our lives.

Our preparation for Lent thus begins with a prayer for humility, the beginning of true repentance. Through repentance, we can find and return to the true order of things, a restoration

of our spiritual vision that will guide us in a very difficult and challenging world. By entering Great Lent in humility and repentance, we can attain deeper communion with God as we receive His forgiveness and He blesses by guiding us to greater spiritual heights.

Icon of the Feast



The icon of the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee shows both men in the manner in which they enter the temple to pray. The Pharisee goes to a very prominent place where others will see him. The positions of his hands indicate that he is addressing God by speaking of his stature and accomplishments. In contrast, the Publican enters and remains in a low place, far from the holiest parts of the temple. His posture shows his openness to God, his humility, and his petition for mercy.

The icon also shows the state of both men as they leave the temple. Following the words of Christ in Luke 18:14, the Publican has now been exalted in the kingdom of God because of his humility. He leaves the temple forgiven, and he shows that he remains open to the will of God. In contrast, the Pharisee leaves the temple unjustified, still in need of forgiveness. Because of his pride and lack of repentance, he will be humbled before God, the One who knows the condition of each person's soul and who will offer the gift of salvation to those who come to Him in true repentance.

Orthodox Christian Celebration of The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, which is preceded by the Matins service. A Great Vespers is conducted on Saturday evening. The hymns of the Triodion for this day are added to the usual prayers and hymns of the weekly commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ. The naming of the Sunday is related to the reading of the story from the Gospel at the Divine Liturgy.

Scripture readings for the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee are: At the Orthros (Matins): The prescribed weekly Gospel reading. At the Divine Liturgy: [II Timothy 3:10-15](#); [Luke 18:10-14](#).

The week that follows the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee is designated by the Church as a non-fasting week. All foods are allowed on everyday of the week, including Wednesday and Friday. This dispensation from fasting is offered as a way of indicating that Great Lent and a more intense fasting period is approaching.

[Hymns and Prayers of The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee »](#)

Doxastikon of the Aposticha, Saturday Vespers (Tone plagal of the first)

Mine eyes are weighed down by my transgressions, and I cannot lift them up and see the height of heaven. But receive me, Savior, in repentance as the Publican and have mercy on me.

Troparion after "Have Mercy", Matins Service (Tone plagal of the second)

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

As I ponder in my wretchedness the many evil things I have done, I tremble for the fearful day of judgment. But, trusting in Thy merciful compassion, like David do I cry out to Thee: have mercy upon me, O God, in Thy great mercy.

Doxastikon of the Ainoi, Matins Service (Tone Plagal Fourth)

O Lord, Thou hast condemned the Pharisee who justified himself by boasting of his works, and Thou hast justified the Publican who humbled himself and with cries of sorrow begged for mercy. For Thou dost reject proudminded thoughts, but Thou dost not despise a contrite heart. Therefore in abasement we fall down before Thee who hast suffered for our sake: grant us forgiveness and great mercy.

Kontakion (Tone Four)

Let us flee the proud speaking of the Pharisee and learn the humility of the Publican, and with groaning let us cry unto the Savior: Be merciful to us, for Thou alone art ready to forgive.

Services this Week

- **Monday (02.26.2024.)**
Venerable Martinian Myrrh – gusher;
Venerable Simeon the Myrrhgusher –
Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM
- **Sunday of the Prodigal Son (03.03.2024.)**
Holy Apostles Archippus, Philemon and
Apphia- *Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 AM*

Donations February 18, 2024

Offering - \$ 625.00 Candles - \$13.00 Donations - \$25.00

Large Candles

IMO Mary Ellen Locher-Byrd from Helene Gleason
IMO Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp
IMO Grandparents Amelia & Pete Mastovich from Rick Kondas
IMO brother Joseph Kondas from Rick Kondas

Saturday, March 2nd - 2:00 PM

At the Church Hall

A Baby Shower for our wonderful
Popadaja Vladanka & Father Dragan
Please sign up for your Covered dish.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FISH FRIES

Friday, February 16th thru Friday, March 29th.

**Huge thank you to our Madison Zahurak, Eli Ribaric,
Nikki Ribaric and Amelia Ribaric for their hard work
at this week's fish fry!**

**Sunday, March 10th - Meatfare Sunday
Luncheon following Divine Liturgy**

**Sunday, March 17th - Cheesefare Sunday
Luncheon following Divine Liturgy**

**Sunday, April 21st - 5th Sunday of Lent
Lenten Vespers at Our St. Nicholas
Speaker Fr. Stefan Djoric - 5 PM**