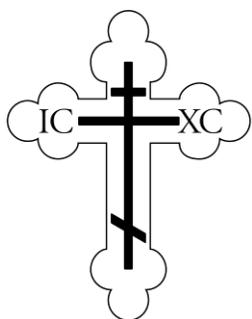
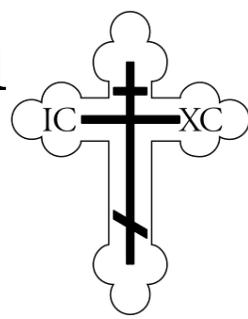


Protection of the Virgin Mary

Orthodox Church



A Parish of the
Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



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Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confession is available before or
after Vespers or by appointment

February 21, 2021

First Sunday of the Triodion: The Publican and the Pharisee

The Paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is itself preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent came last week with the Gospel reading about Zacchaeus the tax-collector. The Sunday after the Sunday of Zacchaeus is devoted to the Publican and the Pharisee. At Vespers for this Sunday, we begin using the Triodion, which is the liturgical book containing all the hymns and instructions for the services from now until the end of Great Lent.

The focus of this Sunday is on the two men who went to the Temple to pray—one a pharisee, who was a very decent and righteous man of religion, the other a publican, who was a truly

sinful tax-collector who was cheating the people. The first, although genuinely righteous, boasted before God and was condemned, according to Christ. The second, although genuinely sinful, begged for mercy, received it, and was justified by God (Lk 18.9). The meditation here is that we have neither the religious piety of the pharisee nor the repentance of the publican by which alone we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ's teaching, and to beg for mercy.

The next Sunday in the preparation for Great Lent is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Hearing the parable of Christ about God's loving forgiveness, we are called to "come to ourselves" as did the prodigal son, to see ourselves as being "in a far country" far from the Father's house, and to make the movement of return to God. We are given every assurance by the Master that the Father will receive us with joy and gladness. We must only "arise and go," confessing our self-inflicted and sinful separation from that "home" where we truly belong (Lk 15.11-24).

The next Sunday is called Meatfare Sunday since it is officially the last day before Easter for eating meat. It commemorates Christ's parable of the Last Judgment (Mt 25.31-46). We are reminded this day that it is not enough for us to see Jesus, to see ourselves as we are, and to come home to God as his prodigal sons. We must also be his sons by following Christ, his only-begotten divine Son, and by seeing Christ in every man and by serving Christ through them. Our salvation and final judgment will depend upon our deeds, not merely on our intentions or even on the mercies of God devoid of our own personal cooperation and obedience.

... for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and in prison and you visited Me. For truly I say to you, if you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me (Mt 25).

We are saved not merely by prayer and fasting, not by "religious exercises" alone. We are saved by serving Christ through his people, the goal toward which all piety and prayer is ultimately directed.

Finally, on the eve of Great Lent, the day called Cheesefare Sunday and Forgiveness Sunday, we sing of Adam's exile from paradise. We identify ourselves with Adam, lamenting our loss of the beauty, dignity and delight of our original creation, mourning

our corruption in sin. We also hear on this day the Lord's teaching about fasting and forgiveness, and we enter the season of the fast forgiving one another so that God will forgive us: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses" (Mt 6.14–18).

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 4 – Resurrectional Troparion

When the women disciples of the Lord
learned from the angel the joyous message of Your resurrection,
they cast away the ancestral curse
and elatedly told the apostles:
"Death is overthrown!
Christ our God is risen,//
granting the world great mercy!"

Tone 4 – Patronal Troparion

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of Grace!
From you shone the Sun of Righteousness, ^Christ our God,
enlightening those who sat in darkness.
Rejoice and be glad, O righteous Elder,
you accepted in your arms the ^Redeemer of our souls,//
Who grants us the Resurrection!

Tone 4 – Kontakion for the Publican and Pharisee

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 3 – Patronal Kontakion

Today the Virgin stands in the midst of the Church,
And with choirs of saints she invisibly prays to God for us.
Angels and bishops worship.
Apostles and prophets rejoice together,//
Since for our sake she prays to the eternal God.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Tone 4 – Resurrectional Prokeimenon (Psalm 103)

O Lord, how manifold are Your works;
in wisdom have You made them all!

Epistle: 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.

Gospel: 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.”

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

N.Dep. Erin Brady

Nicholas Lile

Leo DuMoulin

Protopr. Daniel Hubiak

Vern Orr

Jeffrey Smith

Blythe

Darrell Hall

Pr. James Doyle

Ev.Mem. Peter Kuzmanoff ('39)

Nicholas Nestorenko ('50)

Nicholas Saroff ('50)

Vasily Bardovsky ('54)

Trofim Karpets ('58)

Leanelda Mosak ('71)

Health & Salv.

Archpr. Peter

Mat. Margaret

Mat. Anne

Pr. Christopher

Mat. Jennifer

Andrew

Gideon

Kevin

Jon

Tanya

Jovan

Julia

Warren

Tom

Tina

Jennifer

Gail

Stacy

Jeramie

Olivia

Parker

Christine

Larry

Rollie

Joseph

Nadia

Brendan

David

Sharon

Michael

Janie

Tanya

Christopher

Nina

Renee

Carissa

Cynthia

John

Olga

Mark

Jerry

Michael

Anthony

Janet

Daryl

Diane

Carla

Susan

Timothy

William

Paul

Joseph

Linda

Claudia

Elizabeth

Snezana

Nathan

Kara

Ryan

Thomas

Carol

Christine

Jon

Zoey

Dominic

Declan

Hudson

Ayden

Hyland

Jason

Ted

James

Pamela

Erin

Alexander

Ronald

Theodore

Robert

Craig

Chuck

Scott

Mark

Christine

Dale

Pauline

Mary

Erica & family

Timothy

Lisa

Lois

Michael

Ivanka

*If you know someone who needs prayer, please give their name to Fr Jacob

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We continue to take precautions during the health crisis. Everyone except celebrants and choir must be masked and maintain distance between groups. Those seeking to limit their exposure to large groups are encouraged to take advantage of weekday Liturgies with lower attendance. The next will be this **Wednesday, February 24** for the **Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist**.

As a sign that **our fasting is not legalistic or prideful** like that of the Pharisee in today's Gospel, we skip the usual Wednesday and Friday fast this week.

For **Bible Study** Wednesday, read **1 Kingdoms (1 Samuel) 17-20**.

Mark your calendars:

Feb 23: **Hall Committee Meeting @ 6pm**
Parish Council Meeting @ 7pm

Feb 24: **Divine Liturgy @ 10am for St. John the Baptist**
Bible Study @ 7pm (Zoom)

Feb 26: **Faith Enrichment @ 10am**

Mar 14: **Rite of Forgiveness** following Divine Liturgy

Mar 15: **Clean Monday** (Beginning of Great Lent)

Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$2,202.50

Desire and Climbing the Tree

A Reflection by His Eminence, our Archbishop Paul

The five Sundays before the beginning of Great Lent are important for helping us get ready to observe and participate in the Great Fast. We got started with the Sunday of Zacchaeus a few days ago. As many may know, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann identified the theme of Zacchaeus Sunday as "desire." Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. He faced several obstacles. He was short in stature, and the crowd prevented from seeing Jesus. He was a tax collector,

who was corrupt in his duties, and he defrauded people in the worst way. What business did he have associating with Jesus?

But there was a sycamore tree near him that he climbed. From that vantage point, he saw Jesus, and Jesus saw him. Zacchaeus had his desire fulfilled. Jesus invited Himself to stay with Zacchaeus, and his example of repentance followed. "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8).

St Augustine offers this commentary of the significance of the tree Zacchaeus climbed:

He ignored the crowd that was getting in his way. He instead climbed a sycamore tree, a tree of "silly fruit." As the apostle says, "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block indeed to the Jews, [now notice the sycamore] but folly to the Gentiles." Finally, the wise people of this world laugh at us about the cross of Christ and say, "What sort of minds do you people have, who worship a crucified God?... Say what you like, but for our part, let us climb the sycamore tree and see Jesus. The reason you cannot see Jesus is that you are ashamed to climb the sycamore tree. (St Augustine on Luke 19:2-4)

To climb the sycamore tree is to identify with the cross of the Lord. Zacchaeus climbing the tree was a type pointing to our Lord's ascending the Cross. Though sinless, our Lord took our sins upon himself when He ascended the Cross, where He endured humiliation and the mocking of the crowd. By climbing the tree, Zacchaeus likewise exposed himself to mocking and the crowd's judgment. But Zacchaeus' desire to see Jesus was so great that he was willing to expose himself by ascending the sycamore tree. His life became transparent before the crowd and our Lord. And because of his repentance, our Lord came into his home and pronounced: "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:9-10).

In order for us to see Jesus, we need to have a desire so great that we are willing, like Zacchaeus, to climb the scandalous tree of our Lord. By doing so, we can be transparent, giving no false impression of who we are. How can this kind of desire be nurtured in family life? Some thoughts to consider:

- Parents: set an example for your children by being transparent with who you are. When you fall short and miss the mark, don't hide it from your children, but admit those sins before your kids when able to and appropriate.
- Teach your children to confess their sins to one another. The more we do this, the lesser the burden we carry.
- Teach and practice the repentance of Zacchaeus. He not only came to terms with his sins, but he showed his repentance by changing his way of life.
- Help your children understand that though there is sadness and regret in sins we commit, repentance itself is joyful. What is joyful is that Zacchaeus was lost and now is found. Salvation came to his house, and once again he became a son of Abraham. This is the joy of repentance.
- Remind your kids over and over again, the pathway to see Jesus begins with desire, and that climbing the tree of the Cross manifests this desire. This enables us to see Jesus as we are, and Jesus to see us as **He** sees us; with eyes to offer His forgiveness and love if we are open to it. By this, He comes once again restore us as children of Abraham.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you,

The unworthy +Paul

Glory to God for
all things!