

****IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT CONFESSION AND HOLY COMMUNION****

Until further notice, we will continue celebrating the Divine Services up to no more 33 parishioners in attendance. With this in mind, if single parish members or parish member households - UP TO 33 PEOPLE IN CHURCH AT EACH DIVINE LITURGY - would like to attend the Divine Liturgy on a Sunday please refer to the following signup link <https://signup.com/go/AqSQSmX> ** (Slots 1-33 in the Church and 34-50 in the Parish Fellowship Hall)! **PLEASE SIGN-UP BY 6:00 PM ON SATURDAY NIGHT!!

Regarding Holy Communion:

- If anyone would like to come and receive Holy Communion or if you would like Fr. Jason to come and bring Holy Communion to your home, please contact him to make arrangements:
jvansuch@hotmail.com/609.851.3811/716.875.4222

Regarding Holy Confession:

Taking into consideration the spiritual and mental healing that comes through the Sacrament of Confession, His Eminence blesses, for all priests and communities in the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, that for this period:

- Confession may continue to be held over the telephone or by live video communication; it may also be done in person with social distancing kept between the priest and the penitent (6 feet), and with face masks worn by both. The Prayer of Absolution can be given by video or phone and especially in person.
- When Confession is heard over the telephone or by live video, the priest must read the Prayer of Absolution before ending the phone call or video communication, in the hearing of the penitent.
 - If anyone would like to have Confession, please contact Fr. Jason to make arrangements:
jvansuch@hotmail.com/609.851.3811/716.875.4222

+++++

Please look up the below weblink for the Digital Edition of The Jacobs Well:

<https://issuu.com/jacobswell/docs/jacobs-well-fall-2019-nk>

Please look up the below weblink for the website of The Diocese of New York and New Jersey:

<https://www.nynjoca.org>

Please look up the below weblink for the newly-updated Diocesan Directives of The Diocese of New York and New Jersey for the Gradual Approach of Re-Opening of our Parishes:

<https://www.nynjoca.org/files/2020/covid-19/Diocesan-Directives-on-the-Gradual-Re-Opening-of-Diocesan-Churches-2020-05-08-For-Distribution.pdf>



St. George Orthodox Church
2 Nottingham Terrace - Buffalo, NY 14216
(716) 875-4222

www.stgeorgebuffalo.com

THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Published weekly in the interest of the parishioners and friends of Saint George Orthodox Church, Buffalo, NY a parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey and The Orthodox Church in America

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH

2 Nottingham Terrace Buffalo, NY 14216

V. Rev. Jason Vansuch, Parish Priest

2 Nottingham Terrace 716-875-4222 Buffalo, NY 14216

Cell Phone: 609-851-3811 Email: jvansuch@hotmail.com

Presbyter Andreja Damjanovski, Attached Rev. Peter Irfan, Attached
Reader John Kirwan, Choir Director
Mr. Paul Shosho, Parish Council President
Home: 716-544-7358 Email: pshosho@me.com

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE — Tone 4. Beginning of the Lenten Triodion. Saint Makarios of Glinsk Hermitage (19th c.). Ven. Timothy of Symbola in Bithynia (9th c.). St. Eustathius (Eustace), Archbishop of Antioch (377). St. George, Bishop of Amastrius on the Black Sea (802-811). "KOZEL'SHCHANSKAYA" Icon of the Mother of God (1881).

EPISTLE:
2 Timothy 3:10-15

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

GOSPEL:
Luke 18:10-14

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!

GLORY FOREVER!

****FLOWERS FOR THIS WEEK****

In front of the Icon of Our Lord, In front of the Icon of The Theotokos, and on the Center Icon Table are donated by Bonnie Dan

Altar Vigil Candles are offered by Anthony DelNuovo in Loving Memory of Thy Servants of God – Marion Rose, William, and George. May their memory be eternal.

TODAY'S WEEKLY MESSENGER IS SPONSORED BY:
ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH

WELCOME TO ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH

We welcome all of you to the Divine Liturgy this morning, especially those who are visiting with us here at St. George Orthodox Church. Everyone is invited to the Parish Fellowship Hall following the Divine Liturgy for Christian Fellowship. It is our prayer that your experience this morning was spiritually uplifting and you will return very soon to pray with our parish family. In the Orthodox Church, we do not practice open Communion. However we do invite everyone to come and participate in the Divine Liturgy. Hence only those Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves through prayer and fasting may receive Holy Communion. May the Lord bless you with many years of good health and happiness.

THE SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY SERVICES and ACTIVITIES

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 21, 2021

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN and THE PHARISEE

The Hours – 9:10 AM Divine Liturgy– 9:30 AM

Memorial Litia for Thy Handmaiden of God – Mary Abraham and the Victims of Continental Flight 3407 on the 11th Anniversary of their falling asleep in the Lord. And Archpriest Rodion Pfeiffer and Archpriest John Chupeck

Social Distant Coffee Hour Fellowship in Pariah Fellowship Hall following Divine Liturgy

Church School Class via Google Classroom - 12:30 to 1:15 PM

MONDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2021

St. George Bible Study Class via Zoom –6:30 to 8:00 PM

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Daily Matins – 9:00 AM

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Little Compline – 6:00 PM Adult Education Class – 6:30 to 8:00 PM (via Zoom)
TOPIC – The Mystery of Holy Ordination

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Akathist Service to Our Lord – 9:00 AM

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 27, 2021

The Feast of St. Raphael of Brooklyn

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 AM Great Vespers– 4:00 PM

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 28, 2021

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

The Hours – 9:10 AM Divine Liturgy– 9:30 AM

Social Distant Coffee Hour Fellowship in Pariah Fellowship Hall Following Divine Liturgy

Church School Class via Google Classroom - 12:30 to 1:15 PM

*** * * * * PRAYERFUL REMEMBRANCE * * * * ***

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO KEEP IN OUR DAILY PRAYERS
FOR THE HEALTH OF THY SERVANTS:**

HIERARCHS

Metropolitan HERMAN Bishop DANIEL Archbishop ALEJO

CLERGY

Archpriest Herman, Matushka Cynthia and George *(Schick)* Archpriest James and Mat. Patricia *(Mason)*
Archpriest Alexey and his family *(Kargut)* Archpriest Vladimir and Matushka Jeanne
Archpriest Timothy/Mat. Michelle Archpriest Michael and Mat. Valerie *(Hatrak)*
Archpriest Ken and Matushka Natalie *(Starevsky)* Dn. Sean and Mat. Heather *(McNulty)*
Archpriest Gregory and Mat. Diane *(Winsky)* Priest Peter and Mat. Mary *(Irfan)*
Archpriest Leonid Archpriest David *(Mezinski)* Presbyter John and Presbytera Nancy
MATUSHKI Presbyter Andreja, Popadija Anica and Family
Mat. Katia Mat. Paraskeva Mat. Joanna Popadija Vicki Mat. Christine Mat. Patricia *(Severeno)*
Mat. Gloria *(Martin)*

Stanley Mandy Annette Anna *(Massey)*

Family/Friends/Parishioners of St. George Orthodox Church

William Natalie Natasha Richie

Catherine Ivan/Marina/Inna Bonnie *(Dan)* Coard Karen Aliscia *(Nick Rostko)* Walter, Paul
Edwina Irene Luba Silvu Dan, Jr. Jim, Darren, Marsha *(Relatives of Elaine M.)*
Serena Lillian Reader Victor Nicholas, Andrew *(Wityk)* Frank *(Barb. K brother-in-law)*
Sarah Oscar Albert *(Fadell)* Frank Boris *(Kuvshinoff)* Marilyn *(Linda cousin)*
Xenia, Justin, Danielle *(Friends of Fr. Jason)* Larry Joseph *(Rocco Father in Law)* Ronald, Candice *(Masset)*
Victor *(Tita Nephew)* Catherine *(Tony)* Susan *(Kirwan)* June *(Pavlov)*
Evelyn *(Friend of Julie)* Billy *(William – Mat. Christine’s cousin)* Clyde Allison *(school)*
Robert *(Phillips)* Rebecca *(Relative of Mat. Christine)* Svetlana *(Family friend of Fr. Jason/Mat. Katia)*
Jeanne *(Mat. Christine’s Friend)* Angela, Jason, Michelle *(Relatives of Dn. Mark)* Linda Justin *(Slaiman)*
Carol *(Mailman’s sister-in-law)* Joseph, John, Margaret, Thomas, Victoria *(Ewing)* Ashley *(Friend from Roswell)*
Melody Lee *(Beth’s brother)* Lee, Bridget *(John Kirwan friend)* Paul *(Shosho)* Brain *(Brother of Matthew Just)*
Kelly, Robert, Boris, Zaeb, Tirza, Sabas Sada Thlisinitsa, Gemmal, Geesa, and Patric *(Fr. Peter)* Child Senit
Anne *(Mariami Grandmother)* Jeremy Stewart *(nephew of Bill George)* Susan *(Zumba)* Juliana *(Matusiak)*
Susan *(Deeb)* Justin *(Cmunt)* Louis *(cousin of Barbara)* Yuri/Elena Alex *(Valieff)* John, Kevin Irene Sean
Jaime *(Zumba)* Rosemary Harry *(neighbor of Tom and MaryAnne Slaiman)* Anthony *(DelNuovo)*
Aspasia *(Dean’s Mother)* Charles Seraphim Emma/Alexander *(relatives of Natalie Huett)*
Olga *(Friend of Fr. Jason/Mat. Katia)* Vadym Iryna Yuriy Anastasia Noah *(McEntee)* Elias, John, Joseph
Mary, Hal, Autumn, Ariana, and Amber Judithann *(Friend of Barbara)* Steven *(Uncle of Dean)*
Barbara *(Rdr. John’s Sister in Law)* William *(Friend of Judge Family)* John, Helen *(Parents of Tanya Cmunt)*
Brian John, Roberta, Barbara *(Family of Dana and Annette)* John, Michael John Matthew *(Bashira)*
Rdr Nicholas, Judithann, Michael, Mary, Cate, Michael, Gary, Damian, Olga, Clara *(Bethlehem)*
Jeffry, Dominic, Rachel *(Family of Andrea)* Lee, Benjamin, Harry Patrick *(Relatives of Beth Mellas)*

Diocese of NY&NJ Prayer List

Protopresbyter Leonid *(Kishkovsky)* Archpriest Samuel *(Kedela)* Mitred Archpriest Joseph Lickwar
Archpriest George *(Hasenechz)* Archpriest Paul *(Shafraan)* Mitred Archpriest Daniel and Mat. Myra *(Kovalek)*
Archpriest Jonathan *(Ivanoff)* Archpriest Paul *(Kucynda)* Archpriest Sergei and Mat. Gerry *(Glagolev)*
Archpriest Terenti *(Wasielewski)*

Expectant Mothers Randy Iris, Pete, Sara Douglas, Chris Costa *(Father of Pete Thanos)*

Rachel and the child to be born of her Jonathan Kevin, Lary, Carly, Sherry, Mary Jo, Dragiza, Karl

Those Serving in The Armed Forces

Kenneth, Nadine, Jason, Robert, Andrew, Justin, Shawn, Austin, Juanita Marthia
Chris, John, Daniel, Gjorgie

FOR THY DEPARTED SERVANTS OF GOD:

All of the clergy and parishioners of This Holy House who have departed this life, who now lie asleep in the Lord.

Ever-Memorable Archpriest Eugene Vansuch Ever-Memorable Archpriest George Timko
Ever-Memorable Priest John Bohush Ever-Memorable Archpriest George Aswad
Ever-Memorable Archpriest Rastko Matushka Dorothy *(Timko)* Met. THEODOSIUS
Ever-Memorable Dn. Mark Ever-Memorable Sbdn. Gregory
Ever-Memorable Pdn. Gregory Akhtar Remyat, and Barkat *(Family of Fr. Peter)*

Newly-Departed Servants of God Tedros *(brother of Sammy Afeworki)* Pdn. John *(Eby)* Proto. Daniel *(Hubiak)*

Archpriest John *(Chupeck)* *If anyone would like to have their loved ones added to the prayer list for remembrance during the Divine Liturgy, please see or contact Fr. Jason.

HYMNS FOR THE DIVINE LITURGY

Tropars/Kontakions for Divine Liturgy

TROPAR FOR THE RESURRECTION, TONE 4

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

KONTAKION FOR THE RESURRECTION, TONE 4

My Savior and Redeemer as God has raised up the earthborn from their graves and He has broken the gates of Hell, and, as Master, hath risen on the third day.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

KONTAKION LENTEN TRIODION, TONE 4

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!”

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Steadfast Protectress Tone 6 (Hymn to the Theotokos)

Steadfast Protectress of Christians, constant advocate before the Creator. Despise not the entreating cry of us sinners, but in Your Goodness come speedily to help us who call on You in faith! Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us, O Theotokos!! For You always protect those who honor You!

EPISTLE LESSON FOR TODAY

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-15

BRETHREN:

But 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 LESSON FOR TODAY

LUKE 18:10-14

Let us Attend!

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.

PROKEMEINON Tone 4

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works;/ in wisdom hast Thou made them all.

v: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, Thou art very great!

ALLELUIA VERSES

Go forth, prosper and reign, for the sake of meekness, righteousness and truth

For Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity.

THE HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS

It is truly meet to bless You, O Theotokos, ever blessed and most pure and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim. Without defilement, You gave birth to God the Word, true Theotokos, we magnify You!

COMMUNION HYMN

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

LIVE-STREAMING OF DIVINE SERVICES

As a friendly reminder, ALL DIVINE SERVICES, WILL ALSO BE LIVE-STREAMED from Fr. Jason's Facebook page and our Parish Youtube Page so that we can still be together and pray together. So please continue to join us in prayer!! There are three ways you can join us in prayer via Live-Stream even if we do not have a FaceBook account:

- 1) Go directly to our Parish Website (www.stgeorgebuffalo.com) and on our homepage you will see a a box that says 'Restream: Stream currently offline". When 'live-stream' is active, the live video will automatically appear.
- 2) Go directly to Fr. Jason's Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/jason.vansuch> and there you will see the Live-stream video.
- 3) Go directly to our Parish Youtube Page <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCft4AWAX2COoLZExfMjc5KQ> and there you will see the Live-stream video.

FEBRUARY 21-28, 2021 – FAST-FREE WEEK – FEBRUARY 21-28, 2021

**The week following the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is a Fast-Free Week in the Orthodox Church. Therefore, Meat and Dairy Products may be eaten on Wednesday and Friday of this week!!
If anyone has any questions, please see or contact Fr. Jason.**

=== Scriptural Readings for the Week ===

Monday	2 Peter 1:20-2:9	Mark 13:9-13
Tuesday	2 Peter 2:9-22	Mark 13:14-23
Wednesday	2 Peter 3:1-18	Mark 13:24-31
Thursday	1 John 1:8-2:6	Mark 13:31-14:2
Friday	1 John 2:7-17	Mark 14:3-9
Saturday	2 Timothy 3:1-9	Luke 20:46-21:4
Sunday	1 Corinthians 6:12-20	Luke 15:11-32

**** NEW PROTOCOLS WHEN ATTENDING THE DIVINE LITURGY ON SUNDAYS.....**

- 1) A Parish Council Member will greet everyone at the Front Entrance Doors to the Church. We will have the Sign-Up Sheet there to mark off your name if you signed-up to attend. If we did not sign-up, then we will write your name down and kindly remind you to sign-up before next Sunday.
- 2) EVERYONE attending the Divine Liturgy (those in the Nave and Parish Fellowship Hall - parishioners, choir members, parish council members) NEED to sign-up. Only Those in the Altar do not need to sign-up as they are not taking space in The Nave. Once we reach our capacity of 25 people in The Church, everyone else will be seated in The Parish Fellowship Hall. Everyone must wear a mask while in Church or on Church Property as well as use the hand sanitizer upon entering the Church at the Front Door Entrance as well as maintain the required 6 feet social distancing. Pews have been marked off as to where we are permitted to stand/sit during The Divine Services.
- 3) When receiving Holy Communion, a Parish Council Member will call everyone up - pew by pew - to allow for social distancing (the children and Altar Servers will come first, then the first pews up front all the way to the back of the Church with the Choir being the last ones to receive Holy Communion). If any faithful are in The Parish Fellowship Hall, Fr Jason, Fr. Andreja, or Fr. Peter will bring Holy Communion to those in the Hall.

****If anyone has any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to see or contact Fr. Jason. May God continue to bless and guide all of you!****

Also in the Parish Fellowship Hall, we have the Giving Tree! If anyone would like to sign up for Coffee Hour Readers Bulletin Collection, Communion Cloth, Home Blessing, please see or contact Fr. Jason!



A SINCERE AND HEARTFELT THANKS AND APPRECIATION FOR THE FOLLOWING DONATIONS TO THE PARISH FROM OUR PARISH GIVING TREE

- Matushka Fran for donating Hand Sanitizer
- Dr. Boris and Barbara Kuvshinoff for donating the flowers the Feast of The Meeting of Our Lord in The Temple
- Fr. Jason/Mat. Katia/Anna and Alex for donating the flowers the Feast of The Annunciation of The Most-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary
- Paul and Joan Shosho for donating the Vigil Candles near The Gospel Book/Confession, The Icon of The Holy Sepulchre, Icons of All Saints of North America, and The Icons of St. Nektarios and The Holy Relics for the continued good health of their Family.
- Linda and George Mucyn for donating Plastic Bags for Prosphora

Please be sure to check out "The Giving Tree" in the Parish Fellowship Hall as well as on our parish website (www.stgeorgebuffalo.com) to see how we may be able to donate towards the needs of our parish through our continued support and stewardship for our beloved parish.

If anyone has any questions, please see or contact Fr. Jason or Barbara.

Thank you for your continued prayerful support and stewardship. May God continue to bless and guide all of you, your families and our entire Parish family and keep all of us in His Loving Care!

WELCOME TO THE ORTHODOX CHURCH!

Do we have questions about our life, its meaning, purpose, destiny?
Are we desiring to know Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God?
Are we seeking forgiveness, healing, and wholeness?
Do we wonder where to go to find answers?

We can find the answers to these questions and so many other questions in The Holy Orthodox Church through Her Sacred Tradition, Holy Scriptures, Her Teachings and Dogmas.

The Orthodox Church is the original Christian Church, the Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ and described in the pages of the New Testament. Her history can be traced in unbroken continuity all the way back to Christ and His Twelve Apostles, empowered and sent forth on the day of Holy Pentecost. Incredible as it seems, for over twenty centuries she has continued in her undiminished and unaltered faith and practice. Today her apostolic doctrine, worship, and structure remain intact. The Orthodox Church maintains that the Church is the living Body of Jesus Christ. Many of us are surprised to learn that for the first 1000 years of Christian history there was just one Church.

Where is "**The Church**" to be found and experienced today? Come Taste and See How Good The Lord is every Sunday by joining us for The Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM.

What is Orthodox Christianity all about? How does it differ from other Christian confessions? This section will attempt to answer these questions and many more. For a visual introduction to the Orthodox Church, please view the video link below: http://www.youtube.com/v/Gj4pUphDitA&color1=0xb1b1b1&color2=0xcfcfcf&feature=player_embedded&fs=1 For a brief introduction and in depth study to The Orthodox Faith and to find answers to: "What we Believe?", "Who we Are?", and "How we Live?", please view the PDF link below:

<http://orthodoxdelmarva.org/files/studies/InquirersClassV1final.pdf>

or you may visit the OCA website by clicking the link below:

<http://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith>

or you can begin a Journey Through Orthodoxy by clicking the link below:

<http://journeytoorthodoxy.com>

To learn more ways that we can teach our children about the Orthodox Faith, The OCA has provided a wonderful website for us to use that provides great resources such as (handouts, texts, articles, stories, and much more)! To see this great website, please view the PDF link below:

<http://dce.oca.org/page/resources/>

If you have any questions or would like to know more about The Orthodox Faith, please contact our parish priest: V Rev. Jason Vansuch (jvansuch@hotmail.com) or 716.875.4222 and he will be able guide you.

ST. ANDREW'S CAMP

IMPORTANT DATES WITHIN THE LIFE OF OUR PARISH

Parish Announcements:

- We will continue with our on-going collections for The Buffalo City Mission, Hearts for Homeless, Mats for Mission, HomeSpace as well as Kevin Guest House and our other outreach ministry projects.
- **WE CONTINUE TO CONTACT ALL OF OUR PARISHIONERS ON A REGULAR BASIS TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE IS OKAY, SAFE AND HEALTHY.**

****Please be on the lookout for emails this week with the following items:**

- 1) **Reader Vespers for Saturday Evening (February 27)**
- 2) **Reader Typika Service for Sunday Morning (February 28)**
- 3) **Information for St. George Book Class – Monday (February 22)**
- 4) **Information for Special Inquirer Class – Wednesday (February 24)**

+++++

**BEGINNING IN SEPTEMBER, WE WILL BE RECORDING
THE WEEKLY INCOME FOR EACH SUNDAY AS WELL AS OFFERING THE
MONTHLY INCOME and EXPENSE FOR OUR PARISH!**

**INCOME FOR SUNDAY February 14, 2020 – \$ 2480.00
& \$500 for Capital Improvement Fund
DONATIONS FOR THE NEW BOILER (Capital Improvement Fund) –
Total Donations so far for the New Boiler: \$19,130.00**

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS YOU AND GUIDE YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND PRAYERS!

+++++

Please refer to the Weekly Bulletin and Church Website for any changes to the calendar!

DAILY FAMILY PRAYER RULE WE CAN PRAY TOGETHER AT HOME WITH OUR FAMILIES

A Prayer Rule must be done in front of the icons and the Gospel in our Icon Corners with a lit candle.. It is important to remember that we must make time for God, for the “Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force”(Matt. 11:12).The best time to pray is in the morning or in the evening when we as a family can come together in prayer. Also, when using a Rule of Prayer, we must be flexible and do what we can and do it attentively and consistently. Our goal is to maintain the connection with God and cultivate a real relationship with Him.

With that in mind, please find below The Rule of Prayer offered by our Diocese for us to use at home especially during this most difficult time when we are not able to be in church together as a parish family.

<https://www.nynjoca.org/files/2020/praying-at-home/A-FAMILY-PRAYER-RULE.pdf>

May God bless you and keep you always in His Loving Care!

**** Saint Andrew's Camp has released a new promotional video for prospective campers!**

The video can be found here on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/saintandrewsorthodoxcamp/videos/357928144820497/>

****Be sure to check it out...you may recognize the priest:)**

For more than sixty years, St. Andrew’s Camp has offered the young people of our parishes an incredible summer camping experience. Children and teens have been instructed in prayer and the divine services, the reading of Scripture and the teachings of our Orthodox Church. They have been nourished with the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. They have had fun swimming, horseback riding, playing sports, singing and learning musical instruments, creating in the visual arts, learning to safeguard the planet, and exploring the stars. And they have established friendships that last a lifetime, met their future spouses, and nurtured their vocations to serve the Lord in ministry.

As a token of gratitude for the labors of love extended by the administration and staff, both clergy and laypersons, of St. Andrew’s over the past six decades, it is now time for us to help the Camp in an especially needed way.

Please join us in raising funds for the new multi purpose building which will include new kitchen, dining hall and activities center. The cost of this new building is \$300,000. To become a reality, the completion and furnishing of this much-needed center will require great generosity of individuals, organizations and parishes.

You can click on the link below which will take you to the gofundme.com page.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/st-andrew039s-camp-fundraiser-by-ss-peter-and-paul>

As we continue to fulfill the work of Our Lord by living and fulfilling His Gospel Message, let us open our hearts and minds by providing support and assistance to our Diocese, to our children, by taking a moment to reflect upon what God has given us, and to discern how we might be able to return to God a portion of the blessings we have received.

We extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all of you and your families for your continued prayers, support and generosity.

+++++

****Also, make sure we check out the promotional video for prospective campers!**

The video can be found here on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/saintandrewsorthodoxcamp/videos/357928144820497/>

****Be sure to check it out...you may recognize the priest:)**

Remember our Loved Ones during Our Daily Prayers

'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

{Matt. 25:40}

As we say our daily prayers, let us also take time out to remember our loved ones who are homebound, who are in hospitals and who are in nursing homes. Let us remember them that GOD will continue to watch over them and protect them. Also, during the Year, let us take to either send them a card, give them a call, or visit them to let them know how much we love them, how much we remember them, and how much we pray for them.

Please refer to the of our Parish Shut-Ins below.

If anyone has any questions or would like to add someone to our List of Parish Shut-Ins, please see or contact Fr. Jason. May God continue to bless you and guide you!

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH PARISH SHUT-INS (2020)

Mrs. Diane Salvamoser 147 West Hazeltine Avenue Kenmore, NY 14217 716.875.9503	Reader Victor Shanchuk 495 Lafayette Avenue Buffalo, NY 14222 716.881.3096	Mrs. Luba Japadjief Elderwood Nursing Home (Memory Care Unit) 245 Bassett Road Williamsville, NY 14221 (Room 30)
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Mrs. Catherine Tony 274 Wadsworth Ave. Tonawanda, NY 14150 716.695.3068	Mr. Albert Fadell 317.376.2562
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

Andrew Wityk
Ellicott Center
200 Seventh Street
Buffalo, NY 14201

+++++

WEEKLY VIDEO SERMONS GIVEN BY HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL

These sermons offered to us by The Diocese via video can be found on the Diocesan Website: <http://www.nynjoca.org>! There are videos for each week beginning with The Feast of Feasts – Holy Pascha! Be sure to check them out!

+++++

An Invitation to Support the Stewards of the OCA!

The Orthodox Church in America (OCA) set the direction for expanding our apostolic work in North America at the 18th All-American Council. The foundation for this work is Jesus Christ, Whom we encounter in our spiritual lives, stewardship, evangelism and outreach, and relations with others as we engage the world. Being a steward of the OCA goes beyond the financial gifts which support the work of our church. Being a steward is about caring for and knowing the history of the mission of the Orthodox Church here in North America and finding your place in that history. Having received this great gift of our Orthodox Faith, we bear the responsibility to continue the legacy of Saint Herman and Saint Tikhon; Saint Innocent and Saint Alexis and all the other saints known and unknown who have worked to build up and expand Christ's Church here in North America. Please consider being a part of that mission today by giving to the Stewards of the OCA. For more information, please visit The OCA Website: <https://oca.org/become-a-steward>

+++++

An Invitation to Support the Ministry of the DDB!

In order to fund necessary ministries and fulfill the work of the Church in the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, **Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors** generously contribute financial support. To learn more about the DDB, please go to the following link: <http://vimeo.com/71021182> and watch a 60 second video inviting you to join the ever-growing list of Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors of The Diocese of New York and New Jersey who joyfully support the on-going work of our diocese. Their support allows us to provide assistance to new mission parishes, scholarships to seminarians, support the departments of The Diocese, and much-needed encouragement to older struggling parishes. How about you? Our parish is a member of the DDB. If anyone would like to join, please see Fr. Jason as well as take a pamphlet from the table in the back of the church. May God continue to bless and guide you for your continued support. The Diocese of New York and New Jersey has two monthly newsletters: "**First Fruits**" and "**Beyond the Plateau**." The goal, as expressed by Archbishop Michael, is to increase communication and grow the communal spirit of diocesan fellowship in the building-up and strengthening of our parish communities. To learn more about these monthly diocesan publications, please refer to the diocesan website: <http://www.nynjoca.org/newsletters.html>.

+++++

"Lessons in Our Faith" Video presented by His Eminence Archbishop MICHAEL

His Eminence Archbishop Michael presents a series of talks on matters of faith, belief, and the teachings of the Church. These instructional videos are concise and "to the point," offering Orthodox Christians much-needed information, helpful advice for their spiritual journey, and assistance in answering questions that may come from non-Orthodox friends or acquaintances. The goal is that we might better know and better live our faith. These instructional videos can be found at the Diocesan Website: <http://www.nynjoca.org>! For those who do not have internet, please see the handouts from each lesson which are located on the table in the back of the church. **There are 14 videos! Be sure to check them out!**

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH BOOKSTORE

As you are in the Parish Fellowship Hall for coffee hour, don't forget to check out our newly-formed Bookstore. We have some new items that just arrived. These items include: Icon ornaments, jewelry, Icons, prayer books, prayers ropes, and much more. If you need a Gift, come check out the Bookstore...you may find something you like!! We are now also offering Gift Certificates for our Bookstore. Please speak with Dave or Andrea for more details/information!! We thank David and Andrea Chmiel who are managing of our Bookstore for us. If you have any questions or if you would like to order something that you do not see, please see or contact David or Andrea Chmiel and they will be able to assist you. You may also email them at: bookstore@stgeorgebuffalo.com. May GOD continue to bless and guide all of you.

++++
FEBRUARY 21-28, 2021– FAST-FREE WEEK – FEBRUARY 21-28, 2021

The week following the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is a Fast-Free Week in the Orthodox Church. Therefore, Meat and Dairy Products may be eaten on Wednesday and Friday of this week!!
If anyone has any questions, please see or contact Fr. Jason.

++++

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH MEET n GREET

**SUNDAY MARCH 14, 2021
FORGIVENESS SUNDAY**



IN THE PARISH FELLOWSHIP HALL

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING FORGIVENESS SUNDAY VESPERS

Please join us on Sunday March 14 for a Special **Social Distant** Lenten Coffee Hour during which we will get to know our parish family a little better as we begin The Great Lenten Season!

Great Food ~~~~ Great Fellowship ~~~~ Great Fun for All

Let us come together as a parish family, as brothers and sisters in Christ and enjoy Christian Fellowship as begin The Great Lenten Season!

Please see or contact Fr. Jason, Mat. Katia or Mat. Fran if you would like to help out or bring a Lenten (**dairy but no meat**) covered dish to share with everyone!!



++++

MEATFARE SUNDAY LUNCHEON

SUNDAY MARCH 7, 2021

Please see or contact Fr. Jason, Mat. Katia or Mat. Fran if you would like to help out or bring a covered dish to share with everyone!!

IMPORTANT DATES WITHIN THE LIFE OF OUR PARISH

March 7: MeatFare Sunday (Sunday of The Last Judgment)

St. George Meatfare Luncheon in the fellowship hall immediately following The Divine Liturgy. **Please Note:** Please see or contact Fr. Jason, Mat. Katia or Mat. Fran if you would like to help out or bring a covered dish to share with everyone!! Please remember that we must maintain social distance as well as wear masks and following all proper CDC Protocols and Guidelines to maintain the health, safety, and well-being of everyone.

March 14: Forgiveness Sunday

St. George Meet & Greet in the fellowship hall immediately following forgiveness Sunday Vespers. **Please Note:** Please see or contact Fr. Jason, Mat. Katia or Mat. Fran if you would like to help out or bring a Lenten covered dish to share with everyone!! Dairy is permitted but no meat products! Please remember that we must maintain social distance as well as wear masks and following all proper CDC Protocols and Guidelines to maintain the health, safety, and well-being of everyone.

Please join us on Sunday March 1 for a Special Lenten Coffee Hour during which we will get to know our parish family a little better as we begin The Great Lenten Season!

Great Food ~~~~ Great Fellowship ~~~~ Great Fun for All!

Let us come together as a parish family, as brothers and sisters in Christ and enjoy Christian Fellowship as begin The Great Lenten Season!

March 21: World Down Syndrome Day.

Do you know about the lots of socks initiative? Those with Down syndrome have a 3rd copy of chromosome 21, so on Sunday March 21 (3/21) the world celebrates World Down Syndrome Day. The idea behind lots of socks is that everyone wears two different colorful socks to highlight the uniqueness of these individuals and show their support for the Down syndrome community. We will be celebrating this on Sunday March 21. So get your mismatched socks ready and be prepared to display them on Sunday. We will also be collecting financial donations from Coffee Hour. Last year we donated the money to the local Learning Disabilities of WNY!

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH EDUCATION CORNER



SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN and THE PHARISEE {Beginning of the Lenten Triodion}

The Sunday after the Sunday of Zacchaeus is devoted to the Publican and the Pharisee. At Vespers the night before, the TRIODION (the liturgical book used in the services of Great Lent) begins.

Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee who scrupulously observed the requirements of religion: he prayed, fasted, and contributed money to the Temple. These are very good things, and should be imitated by anyone who loves God. We who may not fulfill these requirements as well as the Pharisee did should not feel entitled to criticize him for being faithful. His sin was in looking down on the Publican and feeling justified because of his external religious observances.

The second man was a Publican, a tax-collector who was despised by the people. He, however, displayed humility, and this humility justified him before God (Luke 18:14).

The lesson to be learned is that we possess neither the Pharisee's religious piety, nor the Publican's repentance, through which we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ's teaching, asking Him to be merciful to us, deliver us from sin, and to lead us on the path of salvation.

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

Luke 18:10-14

**From the Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria**

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 within 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 counted righteous rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The Lord ceaselessly purges the passion of pride in many ways. This passion, more than any other, disturbs our thoughts, and for this reason the Lord always and everywhere teaches on this subject. Here He is purging the worst form of pride. For there are many offshoots of self-love. Presumption, arrogance, and vainglory all stem from this root. But the most destructive of all these kinds of self-love is pride, for pride is contempt of God. When a man ascribes his accomplishments to himself, and not to God, this is nothing less than denial of God and opposition to Him. Therefore, like enemy to enemy, the Lord opposes this passion which is opposed to Him, and through this parable He promises to heal it. He directs this parable towards those who trust in themselves and who do not attribute everything to God, and who, as a result, despise others. He shows that when righteousness—which is marvelous in every other respect and sets a man close to God—takes pride as its companion, it casts that man into the lowest depths and makes demonic what was God-like just a short time before.

The words of the Pharisee at first resemble the words of a grateful man. For he says, *God, I thank Thee*. But the words that follow are full of foolishness. He does not say, “that Thou hast made me to depart from extortion and iniquities,” but Instead, “*I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or worker of iniquity.*” He attributes this accomplishment to himself, as something done

by his own strength. How can a man who knows that what he has, he has received from God, compare other men to himself unfavorably and judge them? Certainly, if a man believed that he had received as a gift good things that in truth belong to God, he would not despise other men. He would instead consider himself just as naked as his fellow men in regards to virtue, except that by the mercy of God his nakedness has been covered with a donated garment. The Pharisee is proud, ascribing his deeds to his own strength, and that is why he proceeds to condemn others. By saying that the Pharisee *stood*, the Lord indicates his haughtiness and lack of humility. In the same way that a humble-minded man is likewise humble in his demeanor, this Pharisee by his bearing displays his pride. Although it is also said of the publican that he stood, note what follows: he *would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven*, so that he was stooped in posture. But the eyes of the Pharisee, together with his heart, were lifted up to heaven in boastful exaltation. Nevertheless, the manner in which the Pharisee arranged the words of his prayer can still instruct us. First he says what he is not, and then he declares what he is. After stating, *God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are*, pointing to the failings of others, then he declares his good deeds, that he fasts twice a week and gives tithes of all that he possesses. The order of his prayer shows us that we must first refrain from wickedness, and then set our hand to virtue. One must not only turn away from evil, but also do good (Ps. 33:14). It is the same for a man who wants to draw pure water from a muddy spring: only after he has cleaned out the mud can he draw pure water.

Consider this as well: the Pharisee did not say, "I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or an adulterer, as other men are." He could not endure even the association of his name with such vile terms, and so he uses them in the

plural, casting these terms at other men, and avoiding the singular, which might associate him with sin. Having said, *I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are*, by contrast he points to himself, saying, *I fast twice in the Sabbath*, meaning, twice in the week, for the week was called "the Sabbath," deriving its name from the last day of the week, the day of rest. The day of rest was called *Sabbat*, and the week was called *Sabbata*, being the plural form of *Sabbat*. Whence it is that *mian Sabatton* is the first day of the week, which we call "the Lord's Day" (Sunday). Among the Hebrews *mian* means the same thing as first.

There is also a more profound explanation of this parable. Against the passion of adultery, the Pharisee boasted of his fasting, for lustful desires arise from eating and drinking to excess. By restraining his body through fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, as was the practice of the Pharisees, he kept himself far from such passions. He also resisted extortion and injustice by giving tithes of all his possessions. "I am so opposed to extortion and to wronging others," he says, "that I give alms of everything I have." Some believe that a simple and single tithe is prescribed by the law; but those who carefully examine the law will find three forms of tithing prescribed. You may learn this from Deuteronomy if you apply yourself diligently (Dt. 12:11,17).

So much for the Pharisee. Now we turn to the publican and observe that he is the Pharisee's exact opposite. He *stood afar off*, and kept himself at a great distance, not only in physical location, but in his demeanor, in his words, and by his compunction of heart. He was ashamed to lift up his eyes to heaven, for he considered his eyes unworthy of heavenly vision because they had desired to see and enjoy the good things of earth. And he *smote upon his*

breast, striking his heart, as it were, because of its evil designs, and awakening it because it had been sleeping. The publican said no other words than, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. By doing this *he went down to his house counted righteous, rather than the other*. For every proud heart is unclean in the Lord's eyes, and *the Lord resisteth the proud but He giveth grace to the humble* (Prov. 3:34, 1 Pet. 5:5).

But one might wonder why it is that the Pharisee is condemned for speaking a few boastful words, while Job receives a crown for speaking many such words (Job 29). The answer is that the Pharisee stood and spoke these vain words under no compulsion, and he condemned others for no reason. But with Job, his friends pressed him and bore down upon him more fiercely than did his own calamities, telling him that he was suffering these things because of his sins. Job was compelled to enumerate his good deeds, but he did so for the glory of God, and so that men would not be misled from the path of virtue. For if men came to hear that Job was suffering because what he had done was sinful, they would not act as Job had. As a result they would become haters of strangers instead of hospitable to strangers, merciless instead of merciful, and unrighteous instead of righteous; for such were the good deeds of Job. Therefore Job enumerated his virtues so that others would not be misled and harmed, and this was why he spoke as he did. Shall we not say that his words, which may seem boastful, in fact are radiant with humility? *Oh that I were as in months past*, he said, *wherein God preserved me!* (Job 29:2) Do you see that he attributes everything to God and does not judge others? Instead he is judged by his friends. But condemnation rightly falls upon the Pharisee, who attributed everything to himself and not to God, and judged others for no reason whatsoever. *For every one that exalteth himself shall be*

humbled and condemned by God; *and he that humbleth himself* when he is condemned by others *shall be exalted* and counted righteous by God. The Lord is saying, "You, O Christian, be the first to tell your sins, so that you may be counted righteous."

+++++

A COMMENTARY ON THE SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN and THE PHARISEE

{By: Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko (of Blessed Memory)}

The pre-Lenten season in the Orthodox Church begins with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. On this particular Sunday the liturgical book called the *Lenten Triodion* begins, and this liturgical book would be used in the Orthodox Church all the way through to the celebration of the Lord's resurrection—the holy Pascha—and then from the holy Pascha—from Easter, the resurrection of Christ—to Pentecost another liturgical book is used.

Now the *Lenten Triodion* begins with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee; on this Sunday the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee is read at the Divine Liturgy and on this Sunday also, at the services of vespers and matins, hymns are sung during the services that relate to this Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. And this hymnology and these Scripture readings are intended to focus the believers' minds on the approaching Lenten season that will prepare them for the celebration of the resurrection of Christ, so that the whole journey begins after the reading about the Canaanite woman and Zacchaeus that precedes this Sunday; it begins with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Also on this particular Sunday a penitential hymn is introduced at the Sunday matins service after the reading of the resurrection Gospel—because at every Sunday matins service in the Orthodox Church an account of the Lord's resurrection from the dead is read, because Sunday is always a celebration of the Lord's resurrection.

But on the Publican and the Pharisee Sunday, for the first time—and this is sung all the way up until Palm Sunday—you have these particular hymns which are sung at the service. They go like this: "Open to me the doors of repentance, O Life-giver, for my spirit rises early to pray toward your holy temple, bearing the temple of my body all defiled, but in your compassion, purify me by the loving-kindness of your 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 your loving kindness like David, I cry out to you: have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy.”

And these hymns are sung together with [Psalm 51](#), the penitential psalm of David, which is actually read at every single matins service, in every compline service, too, and the third hour service, too, at Orthodox services, [Psalm 50](#) (51), the psalm of David repenting after his sin of murder and adultery when the prophet Nathan rebuked him; that psalm: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy, according to the multitude of your tender mercy.” is read daily in the Orthodox Church rule of prayer and it’s read at three of the daily services: third hour, matins, and compline.

Now this Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee we have this parable being read. And I always recall when I was a parish priest how I would discuss this parable with children. Inevitably when you’d ask children about this parable, they would answer something like this: you’d say, “Children, what do you think is the meaning of this parable?” and almost inevitably the child would answer and say, “O Father, the Pharisee thought he was a good guy, but really he was bad, but he didn’t know it, he thought was good, but the tax collector, the Publican, he thought he was bad, but really he was good, he didn’t know he was good, but he thought he was bad.”

And that is a kind of an interpretation that I noticed, that even many adults have when they hear this parable, they think that the Pharisee was really bad and the Publican was really good, and they didn’t know it, but the Publican was humble and therefore God accepted him because he really was a good guy.

But that is not the parable at all; the parable is that this figure symbolizing the Pharisee had done all the external rules of uprightness according to the Law properly: he fasted twice a week, he gave tithes of what he possessed, and that he really kept all the rules. And this was true; he really did keep all the rules: he did it externally correctly. The tax collector, on the other hand, had broken all the rules. In fact, the tax collectors, as we all know, were kind of the paradigmatic sinners at the time of Jesus; they were Jews who betrayed their own people, who worked for the Romans, who extorted money from

the people, who collected more money for taxes than they needed to collect, who gave that money to the Roman occupiers and kept the rest for themselves and basically were considered to be very sinful people.

So this tax collector really was a sinner. He did not keep the laws, he did not fast twice a week, he did not give tithes; on the contrary, he stole money. Nevertheless when he came into the temple, he didn’t dare stand up in front, like the Pharisee did; he didn’t dare thank God that he was not like other people, at least that that moment he knew who he was and what he was because he had had a real encounter with God and in that encounter with God he knew his sin and he said, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

Now Jesus says that when both these men left the temple, it was the Publican who was justified; it was the Publican who was heard and not the Pharisee. And then the interpretation is that if we keep all the rules and boast about it and think that in those rules is our merit, is our religious life, is our standing before God, then we are greatly deluded and we even, if we dare to boast of these things, we are even more deluded.

Now the Pharisee’s problem, so to speak, was he had not really had an encounter with the living God, he had never met the righteous, holy, glorious God, who is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and mercy. He really thought that by these external regulations and keeping them properly that he was justified before God, but the Lord Jesus said that he was not.

And that Publican, who really was a sinner, it seems clear, had an encounter with the living God. He knew that he was a sinner, and whenever we encounter God we know that we are sinners; whenever we encounter God we know that, however well we keep rules and regulations, that that is not the heart of the matter.

Now the Orthodox Church tradition following the Bible would be very very firm and strong and affirming that the rules have to be kept. Yes, the rules have to be kept: we should fast; we should say prayers three times a day, seven times a day; we should tithe, we should more than tithe; we should give what we can to the poor and the needy; and we should keep vigils and we should watch and we should do the Church services and we should keep doing prostrations and we should be careful of our diet; we should read the Bible—all of these things are essential, they are absolutely essential. They are

what prove that we have faith, and they are the ways that we open ourselves to the grace of God and encounter with God. However, as all of the holy Church Fathers and saints teach, these are means to an end; they are not an end in themselves. They are means to an end. Now if we neglect these means, our life really will be sinful, but if we deify these means, idealize these means, think that in these particular actions is lying our whole righteousness, then we are very far from God; we are actually deluded. In fact, some of the Church Fathers would say we are even idolaters because we are worshiping the laws and not the Law giver.

Now no one would justify the behavior of the tax collector; the tax collector has to repent, and it's very interesting that in this parable we don't know whether he repents or not. We know that Zacchaeus the tax collector did repent when Jesus came to his house, but we don't know about this publican. Jesus doesn't say. He simply said he prayed, "Be merciful to me," [and] left the temple. Maybe he kept on sinning; how do we know? But in any case at that moment before God, bowing down to the earth in the back of the building, his prayer was heard because his prayer was true. But the Pharisee's prayer was not even a prayer; it was just a rehearsal of his own righteousness before his own mind.

So as the hymns of the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee say—they say we do not even have the righteousness of the Pharisee and yet we tend still to boast how great we are. And we do sin like the publican, like the tax collector. And especially if we're Christians we are told, not only not to steal, we are told to share our goods, and if we don't share our good then we are crooks, we are stealers ourselves according to the sermon on the mountain, so there is a sense in which we have sinned more than the publican, or more gravely at least, being Christians, but do not have that same compunction, that same sense of contrition before God.

And here we know that we cannot pray prayers of contrition; we cannot sing hymns like: "Open to me the doors of repentance. I bear the temple of my body all defiled. I've wasted my life in laziness." We can't know these kind of things unless we have had an encounter with the living God, though if we have had an encounter with the living God then we will always repent of our sins. We'll know that we're creatures; we'll know that even if we have kept all the rules we are still unworthy servants, and we will know that the rules do not save us. Only God can save us by his grace by faith; yet if we are believers then we will keep the rules, but we will not deify the rules; we will not

idealize the rules; we won't worship the rules or the laws in the place of the one who gives us these rules and these laws.

There is a popular book in Russian Orthodoxy. It was published in 1867 in Russia. It was by a saint named Ignatius Brianchaninov; he was a bishop, and he wrote this book for his fellow monks and nuns because he was terribly worried that the monastic people of his time were deifying and idealizing all the rules, but were not keeping the commandments of the Gospel and were not really living a deep authentic spiritual life, they were just going according to external practices. He said that they were idealizing dried bread and beans and formal readings of prayers and liturgical rituals and so on, and he said the following.

He said, "If we think about the parable of the sower we will understand everything." He said, "In the parable of the sower, God is giving us his words as seeds, and only he can give them; we have no right, no demand, no deserving that we would have these words; God gives them by sheer grace, just as a gift." And then he also said, "God gives the growth to these seeds in us. He makes them grow up bearing "the fruit worthy of repentance," to use John the Baptist's expression, "the fruit of the holy spirit" as St. Paul said: "love and peace and joy and patience and kindness and goodness and gentleness and self-control."

So God gives the seeds, and God makes the seeds grow and this St. Ignatius, this bishop, even said, "And the Holy Spirit is like the water that waters these seeds and makes them grow. The Holy Spirit is the power of this growth, and the Holy Spirit is also a gift; it's also a grace. We can't force it; we can't demand the Holy Spirit. God gives it, so God gives his word and his spirit to us." But then St. Ignatius said, "We have to receive it; we have to accept it."

And then he said, "In the parable of the sower we are the earth." In fact, it's interesting that the name for man is "earth-man," *Adamach*. Adam in the Bible means "earth-creature," "clay-creature." St. Paul even said we have our treasure as clay pots, earthen vessels, dirt, mud, clay. You know that's what we are, but we have to prepare that earth. And so in the parable of the sower, St. Ignatius says, "Where the earth is hard and rocky you've got to get rid of the rocks; where there's weeds and thorns, you've got to get rid of them; where the soil is shallow you've got to deepen it, you've got to cultivate it, you've got to put in fertilizer, you've got to make it ready to receive the words of God," and he said, "That is what ascetic practices are,

that is what the rules of the law are: fasting, saying prayers, going to church, keeping vigils, doing prostrations, tithing with our money. That is nothing but cultivating the soil.”

And then he went on to say: if a farmer would try to plant a field and just take the seeds and just throw them all over the place without preparing the soil, nothing would grow. Some would be on rocks, some would be in weeds, some would be in thorns, some would be in shallow earth, but nothing would grow. On the other hand, if a farmer just kept cultivating the soil: digging it deepening it, getting rid of the rocks, getting rid of the weeds, getting rid of the thorns, manuring it, making it really fertile, but never put any seeds in it, that man would be insane, too, because nothing would grow.”

So he says, “We must cultivate the earth, and that’s what ascetical practices are, that’s what the rules are. But we must also receive the seeds, we must receive the word of God and the Holy Spirit by grace, otherwise there is nothing.” And so St. Ignatius said, “If a person puts all their righteousness in these external actions—like it seems that the Pharisee did—and thinks that they’re really the spiritual life, well, they are just in the hands of devil.” He said, “On the other hand if people never practice the rules, don’t keep the rules, don’t keep the commandments, don’t read the Bible, don’t say their prayers, don’t go to the Church, don’t share their goods, then they are just given over to the crudest sins and passions: gluttony, *pornea*, sexual unchastity, greed, anger.”

So he said, “The narrow path, the royal path, is, yes, to be like that Pharisee and to keep those rules, but to keep those rules with an encounter with the living God, so that those rules open us to the grace of God in humility and gratitude and not thanking God [we] were not like other people, but thanking God that he has been gracious to us. And then, when we keep those rules, then the strange thing is, no matter how righteous we are, externally, we will still pray the Publican’s prayer. We will stay pray, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

So the pre-Lenten season begins when we meditate [on] this parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. So as the hymns of the Church say, “Let us flee from the boastfulness and the pridefulness of the Pharisee who just kept the rules externally, and let’s learn from the Publican’s tears.” And even the Holy Fathers say, “Without tears, no one can be saved.” But what’s so interesting is that the more righteous, the more holy, the more full of grace, the more the

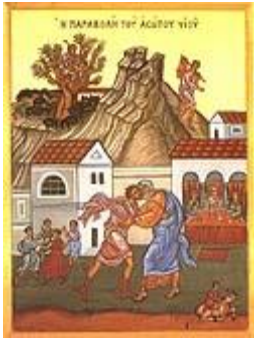
fruit of the Holy Spirit is in a person, the more they repent, the more they weep, and the more they pray the Publican’s prayer: “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

+++++

The Pre-Lenten Sundays



The following Sunday is that of the Publican and the Pharisee. The focus here 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).

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2021		
Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)		
SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 21st	 Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	TRIDION WEEKS Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 28th	 The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare MARCH 7th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare MARCH 14th FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! FORGIVENESS SUNDAY Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 21st	 SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32:12-2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 28th	 ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent APRIL 4th	 VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS HALF WAY TO PASCHA! Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent APRIL 11th	 ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 18th	 ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 25th GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	GREAT AND HOLY WEEK Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 30th	 GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! MAY 2nd NO FASTING!	 HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	BRIGHT WEEK Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a way of life, which acknowledges accountability, reverence, and responsibility before God. A primary goal of Stewardship is to promote spiritual growth and strengthen faith. Becoming a Steward begins when we believe in God, to whom we give our love, loyalty and trust and act on those beliefs. As Stewards, we affirm that every aspect of our lives comes as a gift from Him. Stewardship calls on the faithful to cheerfully offer back to God a portion of the gifts with which they have been blessed. **Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a way of life, which**

acknowledges accountability, reverence, and responsibility before God by

teaching and giving examples of a virtuous life to all (St. John Chrysostom). A primary goal of Stewardship is to strengthen our understanding of the teachings and dogmas of The Orthodox Faith through supporting the work of The Church. This can be found in The Divine Services as reiterated by St. John of San Francisco: "The Divine Services in their composition contain all the fullness of the dogmatic teaching of the Church and set forth the path of salvation." Fulfilling our responsibility of continual learning begins when we believe in God, to whom we give our love, loyalty and trust and act on those beliefs. Through being Stewards of the Gospel and of The Orthodox Church, Education calls on the faithful to cheerfully receive instruction given to the Church by Our Lord, Holy Scripture, The Divine Services, and The Holy Fathers of

the Church. Through Orthodox Christian Stewardship, The Church promotes spiritual growth and strengthened faith and calls on all of us to bring the faith and love of Our Lord to every aspect of our lives as gifts from Him through our time, talents, and treasures. During this year, let us come together as a Diocesan Family and recommit ourselves to both spiritual growth of our Life in Christ as well as through Orthodox Christian Stewardship by attending the Divine Services, attending the many opportunities of Education for both Adults and Children through Parish Education, gatherings, and fellowship and by supporting our Parishes and Diocese in the many endeavors through which, by the Grace of God, we will bring the light and love of Our Lord to all!

LET ALL THAT YOU DO BE DONE IN LOVE. 1 Cor.16:14

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. Matt. 22:37

YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. Matt. 22:39

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU. Matt. 5:44

LOVE IS PATIENT, LOVE IS KIND, LOVE DOES NOT ENVY, LOVE DOES NOT BOAST, LOVE IS NOT PROUD, LOVE IS NOT SELFISH, LOVE IS NOT PROVOKED. 1Cor. 13:4

LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS, LOVE ALWAYS HAS FAITH, LOVE ALWAYS HAS HOPE, LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS. LOVE NEVER FAILS! 1Cor. 13:7,8

