

THE SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

A monk came to Venerable Antony and began to ask that he forgive and have mercy on him. Antony replied to him: "Neither I, nor God will have mercy on thee, if thou wilt not have mercy on thyself".

At first glance, the response seems strange. How is this so? For spiritual life, this is the greatest truth. Until I myself discover the image of God in myself; until I myself have mercy on the inner man who is in the abyss of sin, but possesses the image of God; until I myself have mercy on God's creation in myself; until in my conscience I have mercy on myself, who am sinful, defiled and prodigal, that is, until I take pity on my immortal soul - until then, God also will not have mercy on me; until then, my entreaty will also be in vain.

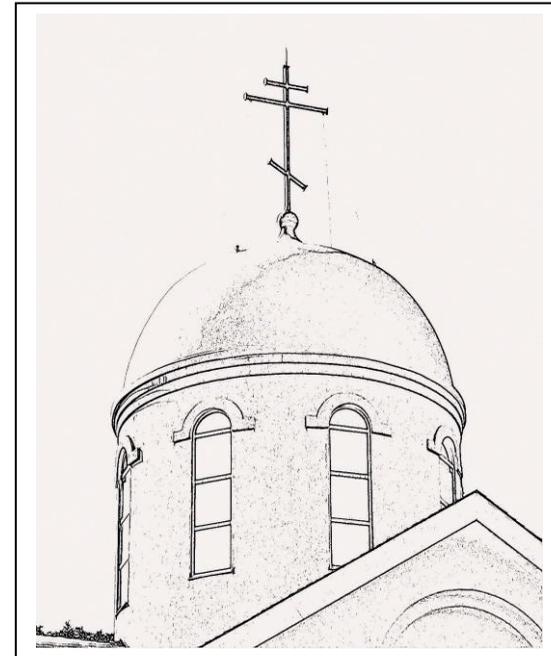
So this state of the Prodigal Son, who saw how badly he is living and how well they are living who are not even sons, but hirelings of his father - this is the state of having received mercy. He had mercy on himself and then went to God and began to beg for mercy from Him. It is necessary to take from the Patristic experience that which it gives us; otherwise, our requests for mercy will be in vain. We must sense in ourselves the image of God, the remnants of Divine beauty that are in us, although they be distorted, and, first of all, have mercy on ourselves and understand who we are in life and who we are in creation.

In life, we are sinful, living in a "far country", constantly forgetting about God, while in creation we are the image "of God's ineffable Glory" and only in Him do we live, only in Him is our salvation.

And this contrasting of oneself in creation with oneself in life also leads at a certain moment to the state of having mercy on oneself. Here is the meaning of Venerable Antony's words. And if we at some moment of our life will have mercy on ourselves and will feel the contrast between ourselves in creation and ourselves in life, then we can, like the Prodigal Son, go to God and beg for mercy. We must renew the image of God in ourselves; we must understand that our sole business on earth is to make ourselves, who are citizens of the earth, into citizens of heaven. If God's creation - the image "of God's ineffable Glory" - is constantly before our eyes, then we shall have mercy on ourselves. This does not mean that we shall be proud, shall forgive ourselves, shall justify ourselves; but we shall see in ourselves an ineffable temple of God's Glory, we shall perceive all the joy of life in God and experience that filth in which we live. Then we shall come to God and shall beg Him, as the Prodigal Son: "make me as one of Thy hired servants"; and we shall be received, as the Prodigal Son.

Fr. Victor Potapov

WEEKLY



BULLETIN

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery. The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you!

Troparion of the Annunciation to the Theotokos

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

A Parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey of the Orthodox Church in America

360 Van Zile Road, Brick, New Jersey 08724

Phone: (732) 458-9032

Email: gjbretton@gmail.com

Fax: (732) 295-0007

Website: www.occa-brick.org

Very Rev. Fr. Gary Joseph Breton, *Rector*

Very Rev. Fr. Sergius Kuharsky, *Retired Attached Priest*

Very Rev. Fr. Paul Kucynda, *Retired Attached Priest*

Rev. Fr. Alexander Smida, *Attached Priest*

Rev. Dn. Michael Pejovic, *Attached Deacon*

Tara Paxton, *Senior Warden*

Reader Matthew Hascha, *Choir Director*

February 16, 2020 Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Tone 2. St. Nicholas, Equal-to-the-Apostles, Archbishop of Japan (1912). Martyrs Pamphilius—Presbyter, Valens—Deacon, Paul, Seleucus, Porphyrius, Julian, Theodulus, Elias, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Samuel, and Daniel, at Caesarea in Palestine (307-309). St. Maruthas, Bishop of Martyropolis in Mesopotamia (422). Persian Martyrs in Martyropolis in Mesopotamia (4th c.).

Today's Readings:

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Upcoming Service Schedule:

Today – **9:00am Divine Liturgy**

Saturday – **9:30am Divine Liturgy** (*Memorial Saturday*)

Saturday - **7:00pm Great Vespers**

Sunday – **9:00am Divine Liturgy**

Next Sunday's Readings:

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46



The Prodigal Son

Coffee Hour Teams:

Today – TEAM E (Bass, Petrides)

Next Sunday – TEAM A (Pasick, Stavrou)

**Please pray for
vocations to the
Holy Priesthood!**

Keep up on OCA news by visiting www.oca.org, diocesan news by visiting www.nynjoca.org, and parish news by visiting www.occa-brick.org.

We are happy that you have joined us for worship today and hope that you will join us for coffee hour after the service. Please note that reception of the Holy Eucharist is only for baptized members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared with prayer, fasting, and periodic confession. You are encouraged to receive the blessed bread that is offered at the end of the service and which may also be offered to you by one of your neighbors during Communion.

Special Prayers

We pray for all our parish family members, but we pray especially for those who are ill and afflicted. Among them are: **Robert Vessio, Betty James, Manya Shark, Deryl Tczap, Reader John Economou, Meni Mari, Tom Collins, Tom Kopec, Alan Diaz, Ann Marie Gahr, Dennis Gahr, Dorothy Studier, Helen Ciurczak, Pauline Barnowsky, Elba Cinciarelli, and Catherine Ratushnuk.**

Annunciations

TODAY – Church School classes will meet at their usual times after Coffee Hour.

TODAY – The **St. Catherine Society** meets after Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall.

THIS TUESDAY – The **Parish Council** meets in the Parish Rectory at 6:30pm.

THIS SATURDAY is **Memorial Saturday**. Divine Liturgy will be served at 9:30am. **Names of the departed** that have not already been submitted to Father Gary should be delivered to him prior to the beginning of the service.

Next Sunday, February 23 – A dinner in appreciation of all **Distinguished Diocesan Donors** will be held at **Holy Resurrection Church in Wayne**. Anyone who has participated as a DDB or who has interest in doing so is invited to attend. Please see the flyer posted on the church narthex parish hall bulletin boards.

Tuesday, February 25 – **Sister Vassa** (Larin) will visit the parish and speak on the topic, **“What is so Great about Lent?”** All are invited to participate in the discussion which will begin at 7:00pm in the Parish Hall. Please invite your friends and family as well! Refreshments will be served afterward.

Sunday, March 8 - Archbishop Michael will preside at a joint Sunday of Orthodox Vespers service for our Deanery of New York and New Jersey at **Holy Resurrection Church in Wayne, NJ** at 5:00pm. Please save the date and plan to attend the service

Father Gary will be joining **Sister Vassa** (Larin) on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land from May 21-30, 2020. Flyers for the trip are located in the church narthex. There is **still time to sign up** despite the printed deadline of December 21.

Congratulations to the newly baptized and chrismated child of God, **Lawson (Nicholas) Petronko**. May God grant him Many Years, and may the Holy Spirit continue to guide him on his journey to the heavenly Kingdom!

Natalie Reilly Anderson, the **mother of Tom Anderson**, passed away last Saturday at her home in Clearwater, FL. May God grant her the Kingdom and may He give comfort to Tom, Debbie, and the entire Anderson family.

Father Alexander Smida celebrated the 1st anniversary of his priestly ordination on Monday, February 10. May God grant him Many Years in service to Our Lord!

MANY YEARS

Birthdays this week:

Today – Carole Stavrou

Wedding Anniversaries this week:

Monday – John and Jean Humecky

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