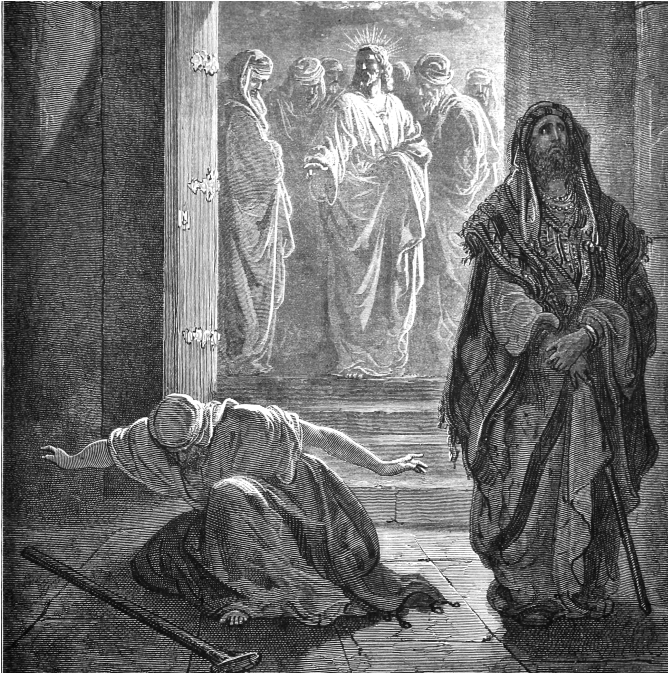




# The Sunday Messenger

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH - WILKES BARRE, PA

+ February 25th, 2024 + The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee + St. Tarasius, Archbishop of Constantinople +



## Hymns for Today

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

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!"

### Please Sing Along!

Singing the hymns and responses to the litanies along with the choir throughout the Divine Liturgy is encouraged!

## Epistle Reading - 2 Timothy 3:10-15

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 Reading - Luke 18:10-14

"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."



## This Week's Schedule Holy Trinity Orthodox Church

### THIS WEEKEND

Saturday, February 24th

5 PM: 9th Hour (4:50), Great Vespers, Confession

Sunday, February 25th

8:10 AM: Resurrectional Matins w/ Hours

**DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS:** A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament through prayer and fasting. If you have questions please let us know!

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9 AM: Divine Liturgy, Church School,  
Coffee Hour / **Monthly Parish Potluck**

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**THIS WEEK - Fast Free Week**

WED 11 AM - 1:30 PM: Private Prayer in Church

6:30 PM: Akathist: "To the Mother of God"

THURS 11 AM: Bible Study

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**NEXT WEEKEND**

Saturday, March 2nd

5 PM: 9th Hour (4:50), Great Vespers, Confession

Sunday, March 3rd

8:10 AM: Resurrectional Matins w/ Hours

9 AM: Divine Liturgy, Coffee Hour, Church School

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### & Upcoming Parish Events

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**Parish Council** is the second Sunday of each month. Our next meeting is SUN, March 10th.

**Friends of the Poor** is the second Saturday of each month. The next gathering will be SAT, March 9th.

**Parish Potlucks** are usually the last Sunday of each month. Our next potluck is THIS SUN, Feb 25th.

**2023 Giving Summaries**: Please pick up your 2023 giving summaries in the church vestibule/narthex. These giving summaries are intended to provide an accounting of monetary donations given directly to the Church during 2023 without qualification as to tax exemption status. Summaries that are not picked up will be distributed by regular mail. Please contact Deborah Mills by phone or text 570-239-4406, or by email [dmilz9@ptd.net](mailto:dmilz9@ptd.net) with questions. Thank you for your contributions during 2023!

**Potato Pancake Fridays fundraiser** every Friday through March 15. Please come for lunch or take home for dinner. A sign up sheet and schedule is in the vestibule/narthex for those who can come to help. We appreciate any time you can offer.

### **Woman's Retreat March 2nd - The Gift of Compassion:**

*From God to Us —Through Us, to Others.* Topics include: Extending and Receiving Compassion ~Compassion vs. Empathy ~Compassion in Scripture ~The Many "Faces" of Compassion. The retreat is Saturday, March 2nd - 10am-3pm at Holy Trinity Church, 1501 Trinity Ct, Stroudsburg, PA. The featured speaker is Presbyter Kerry Pappas. Kerry is a priest wife and licensed marriage and family therapist. She works extensively with seminarian and clergy families, primarily through the Center for Family Care Team of the GOA. Kerry's work of over 40 years takes her around the country leading women and couples in interactive exercises and dialogue. This event is open to all women of our diocese and beyond. There is no charge and lunch and snacks will be provided. Please bring a friend and enjoy a day of reflection and fellowship. Please RSVP to Sara Rusk at [rusksara21@gmail.com](mailto:rusksara21@gmail.com) by February 24. Contact Matushka Melanie about carpooling from the church to Stroudsburg. 404-308-3275 or [melania.neal@gmail.com](mailto:melania.neal@gmail.com)

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### **2024 HOME BLESSINGS**

If you would like to have your house blessed there is still plenty of time! See Fr. Innocent to make an appointment. Fr. Innocent and the family look forward to this joyful time with each one of you! You can prepare for our visit by having an icon, candle, bowl for holy water, and list for living & departed.

## **Birthdays & Anniversaries**

**February Birthdays**: Mary Gurka (2/1), Cassandra Mahaffey (2/2), Amelia Stankiewicz (2/3), Subdeacon Thomas Donlick (2/5), Sebastian Neal (2/6), Emma Sofrenovic (2/7), Paul Tumavitch (2/9), Mitchell Rivera (2/14), David Mills (2/19), Jeremiah Haugh (2/21), Sandy Serafin (2/23), Alexanne Conklin (2/24), Andrew Rivera (2/28) **Anniversaries**: Brian & Kristi Benczkowski

**This Week's Birthdays & Anniversaries**: Andrew Rivera (2/28)

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## Words of Wisdom From the Saints & Teachers

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### What is the meaning of the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee?

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.

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## 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

*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.*

*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.*

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## True fasting is not about food

An excerpt by St. John Chrysostom

*"The value of fasting consists not only in avoiding certain foods, but in giving up of sinful practices. The person who*

*limits his fast only to abstaining from meat is the one who especially lowers the value of it.*

*Do you fast? Prove it by doing good works. If you see someone in need, take pity on them. If you see a friend being honored, don't get jealous of him or her. For a true fast, you cannot fast only with your mouth. You must fast with your eyes, your ears, your feet, your hands, and all parts of your body.*

*You fast with your hands by keeping them pure from doing greedy things. You fast with your feet by not going to see forbidden shows or plays. You fast with your eyes by not letting them look upon impure pictures. Because if this is forbidden or unlawful, it mars your fast and threatens the safety of your soul. But if you look at things which are lawful and safe you increase your fast, for what you see with your eyes influences your conduct. It would be very stupid to eliminate or give up meat and other foods because of the fast but feed with your eyes upon other things which are forbidden.*

*You don't eat meat, you say? But you allow yourself to listen to lewd things. You must fast with your ears, too. Another way of fasting with your ears is not to listen to those who speak evil or untrue things about others. "Thou shalt not receive an idle report." This is especially true of rumors, gossip, untruths which are spoken to harm another.*

*Besides fasting with your mouth by not eating certain foods, your mouth should also fast from foul language or telling lies about others. For what good is it if you don't eat meat or poultry, and yet you bite and devour your fellow man?"*

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## The Treasury

*"... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. + Jesus Christ*

**Monthly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$12,305**

**Weekly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$2,840**

**Collections last Sunday (2/18): \$1,731.44**

**Potato Pancakes: \$1,750 / Pierogies: \$4,027**