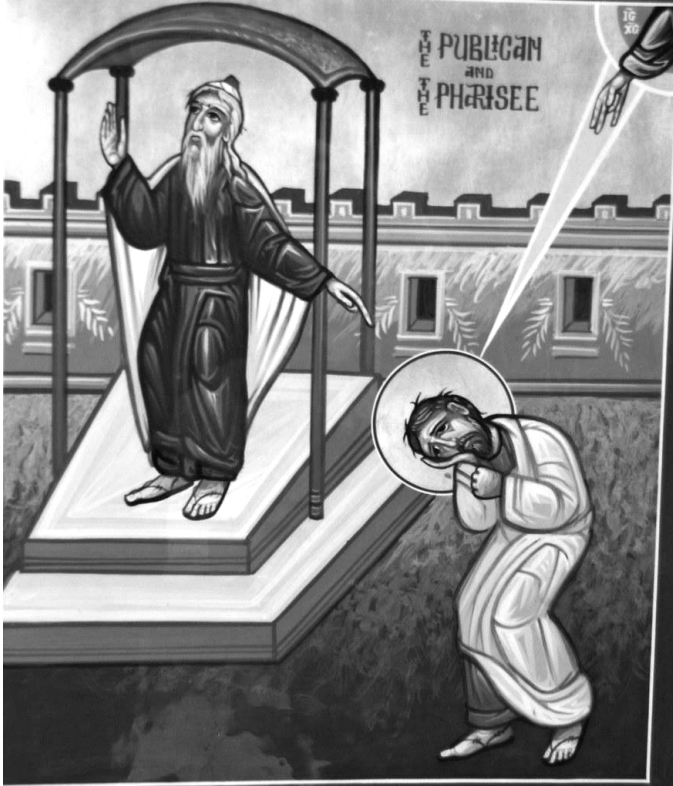




The Sunday Messenger

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH - WILKES BARRE, PA

Sunday, February 13th, 2022 - 34th Sunday After Pentecost - The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee



Hymns for Today

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: "Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Thy Kingdom! Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou Who lovest mankind!"

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!"

Gospel 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."

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!

This Week's Schedule

THIS WEEKEND

SAT, Feb 12th: Great Vespers @ 5 PM, Confessions

SUN, Feb 13th: Hours @ 8:40 AM, Divine Liturgy @ 9 AM, Blessing of the Candles, Coffee Hour, Church School, Parish Council Meeting

THIS WEEK

WED, Feb 16th: Private Prayer 11:00 AM-1:30 PM

NEXT WEEKEND

SAT, Feb 19th: Great Vespers @ 5 PM, Confessions

SUN, Feb 20th: Hours @ 8:40 AM, Divine Liturgy @ 9 AM, Church School, Coffee Hour

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

In Memory of Betty Serafin

\$25 - John & Irene Zimich

\$100 - James Fey & Sandra Havrilak

Parish Events & Announcements

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: TODAY, Feb 13th @ 11:30 AM. All are welcome to attend.

ENVELOPES: If you have not received your box of giving envelopes for 2022 or would like a box, please contact Colleen King or Fr. Innocent.

2021 GIVING SUMMARIES: Pick up your 2021 giving summaries in the vestibule. Those that are not picked up will be sent by mail. If you have any questions see Colleen King.

SAT, FEB 19TH FRIENDS OF THE POOR OUTREACH: Join us here at Holy Trinity at 9 AM, Sat, Feb 19th. We will begin with a short briefing and prayer before heading to the square in downtown Wilkes Barre. Our purpose is to encounter the person of Christ in the poor, needy and homeless, engaging them with a loving heart, warmth and friendly conversation. We will also take much needed winter supplies for any who may be in

need. We plan to be finished by noon. All are welcome. A signup sheet is in the Vestibule.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH IN OUR

COMMUNITY: Holy Trinity is planning a community service experience for our Wilkes-Barre area youth with **YES**, an Orthodox ministry that focuses on developing young Orthodox leaders. It will take place on a Saturday during Lent. **YES** creates formative opportunities that equip participants to serve each person as the image of Christ. **YES** offers leadership opportunities for high school and college-aged youth. Contact Catie DeCarlo for more information.

MAN OF GOD SHOWING AT CINEMARK MOOSIC

MARCH 21ST @ 7 PM: "Exiled unjustly, convicted without trial, slandered without cause. Man of God depicts the trials and tribulations of Saint Nektarios of Aegina, as he bears the unjust hatred of his enemies while preaching the Word of God." Join us for this excellent film about one of our own saints. Tickets can be purchased in advance online. More details to come.

2022 HOME BLESSINGS: If you would like your home to be blessed and have not yet scheduled a time see Fr. Innocent to set it up.

WEEKLY GIVING UPDATE: We need your help! Holy Trinity is not currently meeting its monthly expenses. In addition to your much-needed prayers, please consider giving a little extra each week or making an additional donation. Below are our current numbers.

Weekly Cost to Keep the Church Open - \$ 3,260

Monthly Cost to Keep the Church Open - \$14,127

Collections last Sunday (in person & online) - \$2,943

REMINDER: If you have not paid your annual 2022 Church Painting Loan Commitment of \$80 please remember to do so. This is the 3rd of 5 annual payments towards paying off the loan.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

February Birthdays: Mary Gurka (2/1), Cassandra Mahaffey (2/2), Subdeacon Thomas Donlick (%), Sebastian Neal (2/6), 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)

This Week's Birthdays: Mitchell Rivera (2/14), David Mills (2/19)

PARISH PRAYER LIST Living: Cynthia Dulsky, Theodore & Elenor Sovryda, Nadine Breisch, Sonja & Leanne Kay, Josie Bissett, Lisa & Scott Harvey, Daniel & Shannon Bissett, Delores Karas, Archpriest Daniel & Matushka Myra Kovalak, Violet Filipi, Catherine, Danny Gobish, Lorraine Pace, Peter Holoviak & Family, Evelyn Kosmiski, Joe Sloan, Matushka Elizabeth, Karen Maier, John Metz, Tim, Jeri Basarab, Fr. Theodore Orzolek, Bernie Elko, Delores Voda, Mary Ann Lepa, Eric, Mat. Delores Donlick, Archpriest Vladimir Fetchko, Dorothy Sysak, James Clark, Vasilli (Bill) Talpash **Departed:** Lynn Banks, Betty Serafin

The Publican and the Pharisee

By Met. Anthony Bloom

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

How short, and how well known today's parable, and yet, how intense its message, how challenging...

Intense it is in its very words: two men come into the church of God, into a sacred realm which in a world that is lost to Him, belongs to Him unreservedly: into His Divine Realm. And one of the men walks boldly into it, takes a stand before God; the other one comes, and doesn't even dare cross the threshold: he is a sinner, and the Realm is holy, like the space around the Burning Bush in the desert which Moses could not enter without having unshod his feet, otherwise than in adoration and the fear of God.

And how different the words spoken! Apparently the Pharisee praises God, he gives Him glory - but for what? Because He has made a man like him, a man so holy, so worthy of Him, of God; a man who not only keeps all the commandments of the Law, but goes beyond of what God Himself has commanded, and can expect of man. Indeed, he stands before God praising Him, that he, the Pharisee, is so wonderful that he is God's own glory, the shining, the revelation of God's holiness...

The Publican does not dare enter into the holy Realm of God.

And the parable is clear: the man who came and stood brokenhearted, ashamed of himself, knowing that he is unworthy of entering this sacred space goes back home forgiven, loved, indeed: accompanied by God Himself Who came into the world to save sinners and Who stands by everyone who needs Him, who recognises his need, or not, unto salvation.

The Pharisee goes home, but he goes home less forgiven; his relationship with God is not the same; he is at the center, God is peripheric to him; he is at the heart of things, God is subservient to him. It does not mean that what he did was worthless; it simply means that as far as he is concerned, it has born no fruit of holiness in himself. The deeds were good, but they were spoiled, poisoned by pride, by self-assertion; the beauty of what he did was totally marred because it was addressed neither to God nor to his neighbour; it was turned in on himself. And we are told that this pride has despoiled this man, has taken away from him the fruits of his good works, the fruit of his outward faithfulness to the law of God, that only humility could have given him and his action full meaning, that only humility could have made his actions into life, into the waters of life gushing into eternity.

But then, the question stands before us: how can we learn anything about humility if that is the absolute condition to be not like the barren fig tree, but fruitful, to be rich harvest and from whom people can be fed.

I do not know that we can move from pride, vanity into humility in a single unless something so tragic happens to us that we see ourselves, we discover ourselves completely bereft of everything that supported our sinful, destructive, barren condition. But there is one thing which we can do: however much we think that we are possessed of gifts of all sorts of heart and mind, of body and soul, however fruitful our action may be, we can remember the words of Saint Paul: O, man! What have you got which was not given you?!.. And indeed, he echoes at this point what Christ said in the first Beatitude, the Beatitude that opens the door to all other Beatitudes, the Beatitude which is the beginning of understanding: Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those who know, not only with their intellect - but at

least with their intellect! - that they are nothing, and they possess nothing which is not a gift of God.

We were called into being out of naught, without our participation: our very existence is a gift! We were given life which we could not create, call out of ourselves. We have been given the knowledge of the existence of God, and indeed, a deeper, more intimate knowledge of God - all that is gift! And then, all that we are is a gift of God: our body, our heart, our mind, our soul - what power have we got over them when God does no longer sustain them? The greatest intelligence can of a sudden be swallowed into darkness by a stroke; there are moments when we are confronted with a need that requires all our sympathy, all our love - and we discover that our hearts are of stone and of ice... We want to do good - and we cannot; and Saint Paul knew it already when he said: The good which I love, I don't do, and the wrong which I hate I do continuously... And our body depends on so many things!

And what of our relationships, of the friendship which is given us, the love which sustains us, the comradeship - everything that we are and which we possess is a gift: what is the next move: isn't it gratitude? Can't we turn to God not as a pharisee, priding ourselves of what we are and forgetting that all that is his, but turning to God and saying: O, God! All that is a gift from You! all that beauty, intelligence, a sensitive heart, all the circumstances of life are a gift! Indeed, all those circumstances, even those which frighten us are a gift because God says to us: I trust you enough to send you into the darkness to bring light! I send you into corruption to be the salt that stops corruption! I send you where there is no hope to bring hope, where there is no joy to bring joy, no love to bring love... and one could go on, on, on, seeing that when we are sent into the darkness it is to be God's presence and God's life, and that means that He trusts us - He trusts us, He believes in us, He hopes for us everything: isn't that enough to be grateful?

But gratitude is not just a cold word of thanks; gratitude means that we wish to make Him see that all that was not given in vain, that He did not become man, lived, died in vain; gratitude means a life that could give joy to God: this is a challenge of this particular parable...

Yes, the ideal would be for us to be humble - but what is humility? Who of us knows, and if someone knows, who can communicate it to everyone who doesn't know? But

gratitude we all know; we know small ways, and small aspects of it! Let us reflect on it, and, let us in an act of gratitude recognise that we have no right to be in God's own realm - and He lets us in! We have no right to commune to Him either in prayer, or in sacrament - and He calls us to commune with Him! We have no right to be His children, to be brothers and sisters of Christ, to be the dwelling place of the Spirit - and He grants it all in an act of love!

But gratitude is not just a cold word of thanks; gratitude means that we wish to make Him see that all was not given in vain, that He did not become man, lived, died in vain; gratitude means a life that could give joy to God: this is a challenge of this particular parable...

Let each of us reflect and ask himself: in what way can he or she be so grateful in such a way that God could rejoice that He has not given in vain, been in vain, lived and died in vain, that we have received the message. And if we grow in true depth of gratitude, at the depth of gratitude we will knock down, adore the Lord, and learn what humility is - not abasement, but adoration, the awareness that He is all we possess, all that we are, and that we are open to Him like the earth, the rich earth is open to the plough, to the sowing, to the seed, to the sunshine, to the rain, to everything in order to bring fruit. Amen!