

FEBRUARY 21, 2021

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN & THE TAX-COLLECTOR

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**– Fr. Theodore Pantels,
Proistamenos (Pastor)
– Deacon Euthym Kontaxis,
M.D.**

Holy Communion Order

1. Please remain standing while following the directions of our ushers.
2. Ladies, kindly remove lipstick before receiving.
3. When receiving Holy Communion, make the Sign of the Cross, state your name (baptismal name) , and naturally receive as if being fed.
4. Non-Orthodox Christians may not receive Holy Communion, but they may receive the Holy Bread at the end of the service.
5. *All Orthodox Christians must be spiritually prepared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Please see the priest if you have any questions.*

TRUE PRAYER

There are three parts to the Pharisee’s prayer that indicate his fallen spiritual state: 1) his “thanksgiving “ for making him proud; 2) his self-righteousness; 3) his deceptions.

Regarding the attitude of the Pharisee, St. Theophan the Recluse notes, *“Whoever finds grace finds it by means of faith and zeal, says St. Gregory of Sinai, and not by zeal alone. However painstaking our work, so long as we omit to surrender ourselves to God while performing it, we fail to attract God’s grace, and our efforts build up within us not so much a true spirit of*

grace, but the spirit of the Pharisee.” (The Art of Prayer, compiled Igumen Chariton of Valamo, pg. 137). In essence, the “thanksgiving” that the Pharisee expressed was not an expression of gratitude for having received God’s grace, but for having the feeling of pride in himself.

Self-pride is the mother of self-righteousness. Hence, the Pharisee felt justified in comparing himself favorably against others -- thieves, adulterers, and even the tax-collector. In turn, it is the spirit of self-righteousness, not

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APOSTOLIC TRADITION – In today’s passage from St. Paul’s Second Epistle to Timothy, we find a reference from St. Paul himself to Apostolic Tradition. Apostolic Tradition consists of two parts: 1) the unwritten Tradition, which is comprised of the life-style of the Apostolic Christians, and, 2) the written Tradition, which consists of the Books of the Holy Bible and the writings of the Saints. For Orthodox Christians, both unwritten *and* written Tradition are equal in authority.

A careful look at the text of this Epistle passage helps us to understand the value of Apostolic Tradition. Noting that society in the world at large is riddled with deceptions and delusions – people *“deceiving and being deceived”* – it is imperative that we follow the advice that St. Paul gives to Timothy. He advises us to *“continue in the things [we] have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom [we] have learned them...”* (2 Timothy 3:14).

As Orthodox Christians, we have learned the Holy Scriptures from our Saints, beginning from the Apostles themselves. By living the Bible, we see how the Bible is put into practice, through which the mentality of the Apostolic Church is shared. At the same time, this is the Orthodox Church. This way, we avoid the deceptions of the world. Through his Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul tells us to follow his example of steadfastness in the Faith, which is proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures. +FR. THEODORE



Υπάρχουν τρία μέρη στην προσευχή του Φαρισαίου που δείχνουν την πτωτική πνευματική του κατάσταση: 1) η «υπερήφανη ευχαριστία» του προς τον Θεό. 2) η ψευτική ιδέα του περί δικαιοσύνης. 3) οι εξαπατήσεις του.

Όσον αφορά τη στάση του Φαρισαίου, ο Άγιος Θεοφάνης ο Ασκητής σημειώνει, «Οποιος ευρίσκει χάρη την ευρίσκει με πίστη και ζήλο, λέγει ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος του Σινά και όχι μόνο με ζήλο. Όσο εμπειριστωμένη η δουλειά μας, αρκεί να παραδώσουμε τον εαυτό μας στον Θεό κατά την εκτέλεση της. Αλλιώς, αποτυγχάνουμε να προσεγκύσωμε τη χάρη του Θεού, και οι προσπάθειές μας δεν αναπτύσσονται μέσα μας. Επίσης, στερούμεθα από το πνεύμα της αληθινής χάριτος και έχουμε μόνον το πνεύμα του Φαρισαίου.» (Η Τέχνη της Προσευχής, Σύνταξη: Igumen Chariton of Valamo, σελ. 137). Ουσιαστικά, η «ευχαριστία» που εξέφρασε ο Φαρισαίος δεν ήταν έκφραση ευγνωμοσύνης για τη χάρη του Θεού, αλλά για το αίσθημα της υπερηφάνειας περί του εαυτού του.

Η υπερηφάνεια είναι η μητέρα της υποκρισίας. Ως εκ τούτου, ο Φαρισαίος αισθάνθηκε δικαιολογημένος να συγκρίνει τον εαυτό του ευνοϊκά με άλλους - σαν τους κλέφτες, σαν τους μοιχείες, και ακόμη σαν τον Τελώνη. Με τη σειρά του, είναι το πνεύμα της υποκρισίας, όχι η χάρη του Θεού, που έδωσε στον Φαρισαίον να νομίζει ότι ήταν δικαιολογημένος για να κρίνει και να καταδικάζει άλλους.

Ο Τελώνης εκατάλαβε την αμαρτία του. Ενώσε *μετάνοια* και και παρέμεινε *ταπεινός* ενώπιον του Θεού. Για αυτό ακριβώς ο Τελώνης εδικαιολογήθηκε από τον Κύριό μας και όχι ο Φαρισαίος.
+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

the grace of God, that makes him feel justified in judging and condemning others.

Finally, there is the issue of the Pharisee's deceptions. Giving himself credit for "keeping the Law," by fasting and tithing means that such efforts are not offered out of love for God, but out of his fantasy that God owes him. Hence, he is thankful that God gives him what he is "owed" as the result of his spiritual efforts.

In fact, both the Pharisee and the tax-collector are wretched sinners. The Pharisee would eventually cry out for the murder of Christ; the tax-collector would have continued to work as a traitor and a robber against God's People. The difference is in the fact that the tax-collector *comprehended* his sin; he felt *remorse* for his sin, and was *humble* before God. He knew that his only hope for spiritual, emotional and mental wellness could only come through God's mercy, even though, in humility, he knew he was unworthy of such mercy. His prayer indicates a kind of "hail-Mary" hope in God's love, which, as our Savior pointed out, is in constant supply to those who *sincerely* and with all their souls seek it. That is exactly why the tax-collector was *justified* by our Lord and the Pharisee was not.

From the tax-collector, then, we learn how to relate to Christ our God. We become aware of our weaknesses and faults, *comprehending* our need for Christ's love and forgiveness. With a spirit of *remorse*, we sincerely seek to correct our errors by understanding the "mind of the Church," (which is at the same time, the "mind of the Bible"). To do this, we must be *humble* before our Lord as we seek forgiveness and enlightenment from the grace of the Holy Spirit. These are the steps and elements that make our relationship with Christ our God genuine and fruitful. At the same time, they are the spiritual components that make our relationships with other people meaningful and rewarding. In this respect, our prayer becomes a way of life -- an entire personality in itself. True prayer is *living prayer*, giving the world a true picture of one who loves God. Such "pictures" are the icons of our Saints.

+FR. THEODORE

BIBLE STUDY –Tuesday February 16, 2020 - 10:00 a.m.

Join the Zoom Bible Study Meeting by clicking on the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86578988907?pwd=cFBoaDg3b25hdTU1L3o1NDV2ay83dz09>

Meeting ID: **865 7898 8907**

Passcode: **919868**

Or, using your cell phone, call: 1 699 900 6833 and dial in the Meeting ID and Passcode numbers. We will be studying the following passages: St. 15:11-32

NOTE: When unable to attend Church Services in person due to state regulations regarding the Coronavirus or personal illness, follow the Divine Liturgy through live-streaming provided by various Archdiocese parishes at: <https://www.goarch.org/live-broadcasts>.



“Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord. Blessed are You at Your throne of the glory of Your Kingdom, seated above the Cherubic angels, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

“Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us, also, reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all these things that are pleasing to You. For You are the Light of our souls and bodies and to You we give glory together with Your Father Who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen”

EPISTLE— 2 Timothy 3: 10-15

Timothy, my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconion, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

GOSPEL—St. Luke 18-10-14

The Lord said this parable, "Two men went up into 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 like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up 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, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today.....Sunday School (Metropolis of San Francisco: *“Lenten Journey to Pascha”*) - 12:30-1:30 p.m.
 – St. George Philoptochos *“Feeding the Hungry Food Drive”* begins (Sunday, February 21st – Sunday, February 28th)

Tuesday, February 23rd....Bible Study – 10:00 a.m. (*“Zoom”* format)



***FEEDING THE HUNGRY
 FOOD DRIVE***

*sponsored by St. George Ladies Philoptochos
 donations to be given to The Narrow Door Food Bank*

Please bring your non-perishable food donations to the church hall from 9:30 am - 2:00 pm Monday thru Friday the week of February 21-28, 2021 or on Sunday from 9:30 am - 11:30 am.

List of needed items:

- 2 lb. Packaged Spaghetti
- 15-24 oz. Canned Spaghetti Sauce
- 15-28 oz. Canned Crushed Tomatoes
- 15-29 oz. Canned Mixed Vegetables
- 14 oz. Boxed Mac & Cheese
- 15-40 oz. Plastic Jar Peanut Butter
- 5-20 oz. Canned Tuna 4-Pack
- 14-28 oz. Boxed Instant Potatoes
- 14-15 oz. Canned Chicken Broth
- 14-15 oz. Canned Soup
- Asst. Sizes Cereal
- Asst. Sizes Powdered or Boxed Milk

**Please no glass containers and no opened packages

Thank you for your support!