

FEBRUARY 12, 2017

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT

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THE LADDER

THE PRODIGAL SON

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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.

BODY AND SOUL

The purpose of Christ's Parable that we heard today is for us not to feel despair regarding our salvation. There is a way back to the loving embrace of God – the way of repentance. Repentance is the complete change in mentality whereby, rather than considering our personal, self-centered benefits and greedy desires, we consider God's Will and everything that gives glory to God.

The repentance of the Prodigal Son occurred the moment that he thought

about his father and remembered the blessings of his father's house. It occurred the moment that he comprehended the horrible situation that he himself created through living a wild, carefree and irresponsible way of life.

As the Prodigal Son disavowed his own father in order to live totally free, we also seek to disavow God so that we, too, can feel free to do as we want, even if it is contrary to God's Will.

Continued on page 2

THE PRODIGAL SON

"I am amazed at how long it has taken me to make the father [in the Lord's Parable of the Prodigal Son] the center of my attention. It was so easy to identify with the two sons...We all participate to a greater or lesser degree in all the forms of human brokenness. Neither greed nor anger; neither lust nor resentment; neither frivolity nor jealousy are completely absent from any one of us. Our human brokenness can be acted out in many ways, but there is no offense, crime, or war that does not have its seeds in our own hearts.

But what of the father?...Do I want to be like the father? Do I want to be not just the one who is being forgiven, but also the one who forgives – not just the one who is being welcomed home, but also the one who welcomes home; not just the one who receives compassion, but the one who offers it as well?...Perhaps the most radical statement Jesus ever made is: 'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.' God's compassion is described by Jesus not simply to show me how willing God is to feel for me, or to forgive me my sins and offer me new life and happiness, but to invite me to become like God and to show the same compassion to others as he is showing me. If the only meaning of the story were that people sin but God forgives, I could easily begin to think of my sins as a fine occasion for God to show me his forgiveness. I would resign myself to my weaknesses and keep hoping that eventually God would close his eyes to them and let me come home, whatever I did. What I am called to make true is that whether I am the younger or elder son, I am the child of my compassionate Father. I am an heir."

– Return of the Prodigal Son, by Henri J.M. Nouwen, pages 122-123



Ο σκοπος της του Χριστου παραβολης, την οποιαν ακουσαμεν σημερα ειναι να μην απελπιζουμεθα. Υπαρχει δρομος πισω στην στοργικην αγκαλια του Θεου, ο οποιος λεγεται: η μετανοια. Η μετανοια ειναι η αλλαγη της νοοτροπιας μας ουτως ωστε, αν τι να αναζητουμεν τα προσωπικα μας συμφεροντα και τα δικα μας πλεονεκτηματα και επιθυμιες, αναζητουμε τον Θεον και ο,τι δοξαζει τον Θεον.

Η μετανοια του Ασωτου εγινε απο την στιγμην κατα την οποιαν εμελετησε τον πατεραν του και εβαλε τις σκεψεις του στις ευλογιες του σπιτιου του πατερα του. Εγινε την στιγμην κατα την οποιαν εκαταλαβε την ασχημην καταστασιν του, την οποιαν ο ιδιος εδημιουργησε απο τις ασωτιες τις οποιες επραξε.

Οπως ο Ασωτος επαιτησε τον πατεραν του για να ζει τελειως ελευθερος, κατα τον ιδιον τροπον ο ανθρωπος θελει να παραιτηση τον Θεον για να κανει ο,τι θελει, εστω και εαν ειναι κατι σε αντιθεη με το θελημα του Θεου.

Η απαρχες των αμαρτιων ειναι ο εγωισμος δια του οποιου εχουμε αφαιρεσει τον εαυτον μας απο τον Θεον. Συνεπως, η ζωη ειναι γεματη με δυσκολιες οι οποιες δημιουργουνται απο τα δικα μας παθη και τις δικες μας αδυναμιες, χωρις προστασιν απο τον Θεον, μεχρι ενα τραγικο βαθμο. Οσο γνωριζουμεν την δυσκολην κατασταση που εχουμεν δημιουργησει μεσων του εγωισμου και της σκληροκαρδιας μας, πρεπει να γνωρισουμεν οτι χωρις προσευχη στον Θεον, ειμεθα χαμενοι.

Δια της μετανοιας, ομως, ο Ασωτος υπεστρεψε στην στοργικην αγκαλια του πατερα του. Δια της υπερηφανειας, απο την οποιαν πηγαζει η ζηλια, ο αδελφος του παρεμεινε εξω απο το σπιτι του.

+Ο ΠΑΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ

The roots of sin are found in our own self-pride by which we separate ourselves from God. As a result, our lives are filled with difficulties and even various illnesses which arise from our own passions, without guidance from God. As we recognize the difficult situations that we create for ourselves through our pride, we need to realize that, without prayerful repentance, we are lost.

Through repentance, the Prodigal Son returned his father. On the other hand, due to pride, from which springs jealousy, the older brother remained outside the house. This "house" is, metaphorically speaking, the "House of the Lord" – i.e., the Church.

Prodigal-style living is incompatible with the teachings of the Church. The Prodigal Son had squandered his money in sexual immorality – *"on harlots,"* as the older brother noted. This brings us to today's passage from the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. St. Paul makes several key points, which are relevant for us in today's age: 1) *"All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful."* (6:12). (In other words, we have freedom, to do as we wish, but it is through God's wisdom that we do things that are beneficial; we must choose.) 2) *"Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and you are not your own."* (6:19). Why? Because, *"You were bought at a price (Christ gave His life on the Cross for our salvation, thereby claiming us as His property.)* 3) *"Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."* (6:20). Our bodies are the vehicles through which we impart the blessings from our souls to others.

Given these thoughts from St. Paul, the Sacrament of Holy Unction is performed, in accordance to the directive from St. James: *"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call the elders of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord."* (St. James 5:14). The prayers of the Sacrament of Holy Unction seek the healing of one's *body and soul*, comparable to the Communion Prayer of the Divine Liturgy, *"Let not these Holy Mysteries be for my condemnation.. But rather for the cleansing and sanctification of both body and soul.."* As we priests travel through the halls of hospitals and nursing homes, we read prayers for the healing of patients' *bodies and souls*. Why would Christ our God perform so many miracles of physical healing, if the well-being of our bodies were not of value to Him? The answer to this question is that our *bodies and souls* are indeed dear to God.

I like the note found in *The Orthodox Study Bible* regarding this passage, noting that liberals in St. Paul's day, as in our own, *"argued that illicit sex (adultery and fornication) is as necessary for the body as is eating food, and both are irrelevant to the spiritual life. St. Paul contends that the body belongs to God and everything is relevant to spiritual life."* (pg. 1558).
+FR. THEODORE

PRAY FOR THE SICK: Yvonne Flessas, George Aeder, Adele Gallade, Mike & Kathy Ligeros, Nicholas Kyriakou, Argyroula Krespis (Nick Krespis' mother), Constantine Papapetru (*Many of the faithful on our Prayer List face chronic or serious illness*).

HYMNS AND READINGS FOR TODAY'S CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

ANTIPHON I: *"Tes presvies tis Theotokou..." (By the prayers of the Theotokos...)*

Verse 1— Bless the Lord, O my soul, and everything within me, bless His holy name.

Refrain: *"Tes presvies tis Theotokou, soter, soston imas."*

Verse 2— Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His rewards.

Refrain: *"By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, save us."*

Verse 3— The Lord prepared His throne in heaven, and His Kingdom rules over all.

Refrain: *"Tes presvies tis Theotokou, soter, soston imas."*

Chanter(s): *Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.*

Refrain: *"By the prayers of the Theotokos, Savior, save us."*

ANTIPHON II: *"Soston imas Ie Theou..." (Save us, O Son of God...)*

Verse 1— Praise the Lord, O my soul! I shall praise the Lord while I live; I shall sing to my God as long as I exist.

Refrain: *"Soston imas, Yie Theou, O Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si alleluia."*

Verse 2— Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob; his hope is in the Lord his God.

Refrain: *"Save us, O Son of God, Who is Risen from the dead, Alleluia."*

Verse 3— The Lord shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Refrain: *"Soston imas Ie Theou, O Anastas ek nekron, psallontas si alleluia."*

Doxa Patri ke Io ke Aghio Pnevmati ke nin ke aei ke eis tous eonas ton eonon.

People: *"O Monogenis Ios ke Logos tou Theou..." (O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God...)*

HYMNS FOR THE ENTRANCE WITH THE HOLY GOSPEL: ANTIPHON III— Listen, O daughter, behold and incline your ear and forget your people and your father's house. The rich among the people shall entreat your favor and I will remember your name from generation to generation.

Sunday Resurrection Hymn: *Tou lithou sfraghisthendos...[Tone 1] (The stone that had been sealed before Your tomb by the Judeans and the soldiers guarding did watch over Your pure and sacred Body, O Savior, the third day You arose and unto all the world did You give life, whereby all the heavenly powers proclaim that You are the Giver of Life. Glory unto our Resurrected Christ; glory unto Your Kingdom; glory to Your dispensation, O You alone Who loves all.)*

Hymn for St. George: *Os ton ehmaloton eleftherotis (pg. 110 in the Divine Liturgy books)*

Kontakion Hymn for this Sunday: *Tis patroh-as doxeis sou...(I revolted senselessly out of Your fatherly glory; I have squandered sinfully all of the riches You gave me. Hence to You, using the Prodigal's words, I cry out, I have sinned before You, merciful loving Father. O receive me in repentance, I pray, and treat me as one of Your hired hands.)*

READINGS: EPISTLE— 1 Corinthians 6:12-20/ **GOSPEL—** St. Luke 15: 11-32

Axion Estin. "It is truly right to bless you...(page 52 in the Divine Liturgy Books)

Communion Hymn— *Enite ton Kyrion...(Praise the Lord in the heavens; praise Him in the highest. Alleluia.)*

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the well-spring of life"

Proverbs 4:23



ANNOUNCEMENTS

PHILOPTOCHOS – The festival is in two weeks! We need electric fry pans to dip the **melomakarona** in the hot syrup. Please bring your fry pans to the kitchen. Make sure your name is on the pan so we can return it to you. This week we are making **baklava** for three days. We need lots of hands not only to make baklava but to cut the pieces and seal the pans for freezing. Also, we need help in measuring the ingredients for loukoumathes. Please look at the schedule on the bulletin board.

GREEK FESTIVAL VOLUNTEERS – If you have not already done so, please volunteer to work at our Festival, which is being held on Saturday and Sunday, February 25th and 26th. You can sign up in the church hall after Liturgy. The **“Festival Volunteer” Sign-up Table** is located near the bookstore. If you have any questions, please contact **Jim Christopoulos at: goofy_328@yahoo.com**, or call him at: **(760) 902-8460. This week: help is needed for the preparation of the baklava.**

YIAYIA’S ATTIC – Now is the time to bring items for Yiayia’s Attic in support of our 2017 Festival. Please drop them off in our parish hall at any time during the week. Call before making your delivery to arrange for assistance upon your arrival. Please see **Becky Allen** for more information.

FESTIVAL FLIERS – 2017 Festival Fliers and posters are available in our parish hall and ready for distribution throughout our community by St. George parishioners. If everyone distributes a few fliers throughout this month, it will help insure the success of this year’s Festival.

ST. GEORGE PARISH FEAST DAY/ GOLF TOURNAMENT – The **St. George Feast Day is Sunday, April 23, 2017.** We are honored to host **His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos.** As part of our Feast Day celebrations, we look forward to everyone’s support toward the success of our annual **St. George Golf Tournament - April 21 – 22, 2017.** Registration and Reservation Forms will soon be available.

KNITTING CLASS – Our thanks to all who have joined our knitting group! Due to festival preparations we will not be having any more knitting meetings this month. The knitting group will resume on **Wednesday, March 8th @ 5:30 pm.**

FESTIVAL TEE-SHIRTS - Booth Chairpersons can pick up their Booth volunteer tee shirts after Liturgy in the church hall this Sunday, February 12th and next Sunday, February 19th. We will be wearing the blue festival tee-shirts from our past Greek festivals. See **Rhonda Latkovic.**

WEEKDAY CALENDAR

Tuesday, February 14th.....Bible Study- 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, February 16th....Choir Practice - 1:00 p.m.

Friday, February 17th.....ST. THEODORE OF TYRE

Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Saturday, February 18th.....SATURDAY OF SOULS

Orthros-8:30 a.m./Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.

Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday through Saturday (Feb. 15-18) : Booth set-up for the Festival.

Please complete the special form, available in our parish hall, for listing friends and loved ones to be commemorated on the “Saturdays of the Souls” - February 18th; February 25th and March 4, 2017

The Ladder for the month of February 2017 is donated by

Annette Lewis

“In loving memory of Skip Lewis: 1 year of going to the Lord”

We encourage all of our parents to sit in the church with their entire family as they participate in the beauty and mysteries of the Divine Liturgy. For those with young children, feel free to sit near an aisle so that you may easily take your children for a break, as needed. If necessary, we have a “crying room” in the narthex for your use. God Bless.

