



## ***The Healing of the Blind man***

### ***Troparion of the Resurrec- tion, Tone 8***

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One. Thou didst accept the three-day burial to free us from our sufferings. O Lord, our Life and Resurrection: Glory to Thee!

### ***Kontakion of Annunciation, Tone 8***

O Victorious Leader of triumphant hosts! We, your servants delivered from evil, sing our grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos! As you possess invincible might set us free from every calamity so that we may sing: Rejoice, O Unwedded Bride!

### ***For Nativity/Theophany: Feasts of Divine Illumination..***

I know Thee, O Lord; I know Thee clearly. I know Thee, since I have been taught by Thee; for no one can recognize Thee, unless He enjoys Thine illumination.

# **Orthodox Church of the Annunciation**

***The 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost,  
January 31st , Tone 1, Matt. 25:14-30***

On the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, in the reading from the gospel, the Church gives us the parable of the talents. A man, on leaving for a far country, entrusts the care of his goods to his servants. When he returns, he calls them to account for their stewardship. He praises those who, having received five talents or two talents went out and doubled the sums. But he rebukes and casts “into outer darkness” the servant who buried his talent in the earth and imagined he had fulfilled his duty sufficiently by giving back the one talent he had received.

The goods which the master entrusts to his servants signify the natural gifts granted by God to his creatures: health, intelligence, riches, etc....All these exist through God and for God; we are no more than the keepers charged with administering these divine assets. But the talents signify above all the supernatural gifts, the communication of divine life to men and the graces with which we are showered at every instant.

The parable, it must be admitted, is fairly frightening. For which one of us can say that he has so much as kept intact the capital of natural and supernatural gifts received from God/ Have we not abused these graces, have we not profaned them and wasted them? Still more, which one of us would dare to say that he has made the best use of the amount entrusted to him, or that he has doubled or trebled it? This parable brings us a message both of severity and of goodness, and we have no right to suppress either one or the other of these aspects.

Three sentences in the parable express this duality well, and serve to strengthen in us both fear and filial trust. First of all, there is the insulting remark of the bad servant: “Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown...And I was afraid. The master reproves him in these words: “Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not.” It seems that the servant’s mistake is not so much that he failed to make his talent bear fruit and that he harbored deformed, hostile and cruel ideas about his master. What the words suggest, without saying as much, is that if the servant had spoken differently—if he had said: “Lord, I know that thou art a merciful master who alone knows how to harvest where I did not know how to sow...and that is why, despite my serious mistake, I come to thee with trust”—then the master would have pardoned him.

Another very important sentence is this: “Unto everyone that hath shall be given... but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” Many people find these words hard and incomprehensible, but the meaning is simple. One misdeed leads to another misdeed; one good deed leads on to another good deed; if you give in to sin once, you will become weaker, you will give in another time, and still more times, and you will find yourself slithering down a slope on which it becomes increasingly difficult to stop- and you will lose even the little you had. By

## Announcements and Activities

**Great Vespers for the Feast of the Presentation**— Monday, at 6 PM. With just our skeletal crew.

**Divine Liturgy for the Feast**— Tuesday, at 9AM, inside, with limited attendance, as it appears rain is coming again. Holy Communion will be given at the door, just before 10AM.

**Great Vespers**— Saturday, limited crew, at 5:30 PM.

**Divine Liturgy**— Sunday, at 10AM. In the courtyard, weather permitting, and inside with the small livestream crew, if not possible because of weather conditions. Fr. Lawrence will email you early Sunday if that is the case.

**Tent Damage**— Probably most have seen in my email that our tent was damaged by Monday's fierce winds and downpours. 10 brave parishioners managed to avoid the tent being uprooted by 65 mph gusts and, very likely, potentially damaging property, or, most frightening of all, hurting or killing someone. Given the windy season being upon us and an inability to both predict similar winds and provide the on-the-spot crews to remove the top tarp if they come, the plan is to repair the structural piping and put the tent away for the time being. As you know, while the tent was a nice shield from the bright sun and any mishaps with circling birds, our having the Liturgy on the courtyard without it poses no new challenges to the gathering. Last Sunday was cold and there is no way around that's being the case for some time. Reductions in new cases is promising where Vladyka's eventual lifting of the directive against currently meeting inside is concerned. We both pray for and encourage strength to run the backside of our long, fatigue-filled passage through the pandemic. Those of you whose bones, like mine, get a little more susceptible to the cold, year by year, are advised to dress warmly. Of course there remains the option to Livestream or read the Typika and come to the Church for Communion at the end of the Divine Liturgy. Thus far, amidst many churches who for reasons of case exposure had to close for 10 days— at least 5 in our diocese and many in dioceses for states that have less restrictive measures for suppressing the virus— we have been able to safely and regularly meet. Believe me, I am aware through dozens of conversations with my spiritual children over hundreds and hundreds of miles, that it is frustrating. As I said in my report, I thank you for your unity and support and am greatly heartened that the Divine Liturgy, so needed to bring Divine Grace to our difficult times, has, to date, only been missed for one Sunday. And by coming in person, by Communion at the door when necessary, and through my going to the doors of some members in order to Commune them, everyone in the parish has opportunity to be united (in our small 'bubble') to the Lord and to one another. For that, I am infinitely grateful.

**Back outdoors:** Doubtless all of you have read my latest Directive (11/20) informing you of our being back outside for Sunday Liturgies and doing feastdays and sacraments with a very small group of people in the Livestream style. On days when the Liturgy is being done in a livestream type of arrangement, you may still come to the door at the end of the Service for Holy Communion.

**Annual Meeting**— Thank you dear parishioners for braving the increasing winds and voting at the elections for parish council. John Truman was elected to the office of VP for a one year term and to the parish council for a two year term. Treasurer Sunday Ballas was elected to a two year term on council, as was council member Aaron Cantrell. Reports were accepted and filed, including the very unexpected Treasurer's Report with a surplus, thanks to generous pledges and to your efforts to eliminate shortfalls through hard work at fundraisers. We also adopted a similar budget for 2021 and Treasurer Sunday Ballas both thanked the members for their faithfulness in 2020 and asked that the members be sure to submit their pledge form, as it is her way of calculating what is expected in pledged income, the main component of our yearly budget.

**Pray for...** Hierarch Nikolai (Soraich)—battling cancer. Natalia—Olga's friend. Sunday's brother, Joe, ill. Chance— Kerri's nephew Emory—a young relative of Kirk and Kathy. Linda, Mary S.'s daughter. Sarah—the sister of John Deak who is battling

contrast, the smallest effort towards God, no matter how small, will make other efforts easier and, the more you strive, the more grace abounds and will be given you.

And lastly, let us look at these words: "thou good and faithful servant...thou hast been faithful lover the few things, I will make thee ruler over many things," Faithfulness in the small things is the first step on the road, it is the necessary condition for faithfulness in the great things. If I am not capable of great things, I shall at least try to do the small things. If I have squandered the talents that were entrusted to me, I shall begin again humbly, patiently, to be faithful in the very small things: to be honest, pure and willing in ever day life. On the first foundation of small things, God will be able to build something larger, and one day perhaps I shall hear the invitation: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

(taken from The Year of Grace of the Lord, by a Monk of the Eastern Church)

### **From the Lives of the Saints... CYRUS AND JOHN, UNMERCE- NARIES AND MIRACLE-WORKERS**

These charitable and glorious saints were not blood brothers, but were brothers in the spirit. Cyrus began in Alexandria, and as a physician he healed people by the power of Christ and by his knowledge of medicine. Learning that sickness mostly befalls man because of sin, Cyrus always directed the sick to purify their souls from sin through repentance and prayer, and thereby to restore health to their bodies. When Diocletion's persecution against Christians began, Cyrus withdrew to Arabia, where he received the monastic tonsure. He became as famous in Arabia as he had been in Alexandria, so that people there also resorted to him for assistance. Hearing about Cyrus, John—then a Roman officer in Edessa—came to Arabia to see him. Upon meeting, they loved one another as a brother loves a brother, and remained together to live a life of asceticism. At that time, a certain Christian woman named Anastasia and her three daughters were tortured by the persecutors in the town of Canopus. Hearing of this, Cyrus and John came to Canopus to encourage the mother and her daughters not to abandon the Faith. Truly, thanks to the counsel of these saints, Anastasia endured all tortures, and with her daughters she was martyred for Christ. The daughters of Anastasia were: Saints Theoctista, age fifteen; Theodora, age thirteen; and Eudocia, age eleven. The tormentors then captured Cyrus and John, who were beheaded after imprisonment and torture in the year 311 A.D. Numerous miracles were wrought by these martyrs, both during their lives and after their deaths. Their relics were translated to Rome during the reign of Emperor Arcadius. These saints are invoked for assistance, especially during the Blessing of Water, in the Sacrament of Holy Unction, and by those suffering from insomnia.

### **THE HOLY MARTYR TRYPHAENA**

Tryphaena willingly and courageously endured many tortures for Christ. Because she did not want to deny her Faith, a wild ox was goaded to attack her, and gored her to death. This occurred in the first century. St. Tryphaena is invoked by mothers who are unable to nurse their children.

Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

*"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)*