



The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 2

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead! And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of heaven cried out: O Giver of Life! Christ our God! Glory to Thee!

Troparion of Annunciation, Tone 4

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery! the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you.

Kontakion for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, Tone 3

I have recklessly forgotten Thy glory, O Father; and among sinners I have scattered the riches which thou gavest me. And now I cry to Thee as the Prodigal: I have sinned before Thee, O merciful Father; receive me a penitent and make me as one of Thy hired servants.

Weekly Bulletin

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

February 20th , Tone 2, Lu.15:11-32

Of all the gospel parables, that of the prodigal son (Lu.15:11-31) is perhaps the best known and the most familiar. It is certainly one of the most touching. Possibly we do not always realize where the center of the parable lies. Is it in the change of heart experienced by the young man who has left his father, squandered his inheritance in the life of debauchery, suffered such hunger that he envied the pigs who had husks to eat, and then decided to leave and return to his father? Certainly the young man's words: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" — indeed, these words are a deeply moving expression of repentance. The prodigal son's decision, "I will arise and go to my father," throws a clear light on the importance of vigorous action, of an act of will (one cannot go to the Father without first getting up and setting off). All the same, the repentant young man is not the most attractive figure in the parable. His repentance is neither the result of a totally disinterested change of heart, nor is it free from all self-interest: the prodigal son wants to escape from misery, and he chooses the only way open to him.

The central figure in the parable is, rather, the person of the Father. Here we are in the presence of a completely unselfish and freely given expression of tenderness. A tenderness which has waited and kept watch, which is on the look-out for the return of the prodigal, and which, when seeing him still far off, can no longer wait or restrain itself. The father, overwhelmed with compassion, runs out to meet his child, falls on his neck and kisses him warmly. (In the east, such behavior would be considered most unsuitable to the dignity of an old man), And then the father, without voicing any reproach to the prodigal, gives orders that a ring be put on his finger (the sign of an heir), and shoes on his feet (the sign of a free man as distinct from a slave), and for the fatted calf to be killed, and a feast prepared. He has the "best robe" brought and put on his son: we notice that it is not the best from among the robes that the prodigal might have possessed before his departure, but the best robe to be found in the house. God does not simply restore a repentant sinner to the grace he might have possessed before sinning: he bestows on him the greatest grace he could receive, a maximum of grace.

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

From the Lives of the Saints...

SAINT LEO, BISHOP OF CATANIA

Announcements and Activities

Saturday Great Vespers— on Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Sunday Divine Liturgy— 10AM.

House Blessings— Please let Fr. Lawrence know if you want your house blessed. Lent is very near.

Church School/Adult Ed.— will next meet on Sunday, February 27th.

Coffee Hours— This week's Coffee Hour is being sponsored by Michael T. and Michael M. Next week's Coffee Hour is our mini potluck and will be the last day on which meat is served at Coffee Hour until Pascha.

Pray for... Hierarch Nikolai (Soraich)—battling cancer. Samir's friend, **Johnny, who has been improving in the battle to save his sight.** **Brian,** Sunday's brother. **George and Alex,** health problems. **All those who have lost their lives or are suffering as a result of the current Pandemic.** **Archimandrite Alexander**— Fr. Lawrence's long-time father confessor, who reposed. **Our Vladyka Benjamin**—battling on-set parkinsons. **Tsige Roman and Abraham**— I know we are always mindful of Tsige, but please continue to pray for the work and for Ethiopia, torn by civil war, with all the problems that go with a regional terror. **Reposed Jonathan T. George and Alesis,** Brother and Daughter of Peter and Irene S. **Matushka Ioanna R. reposed.** **Matushka Priscilla, ill.** **Anya J** — a longtime friend of the parish who is ill. **Stephen F.**— battling back pain. **John F.**— battling cancer. **Archpriest Anthony**— battling cancer. **Julie**— sister of Kathy M., battling health problems. **Rhoda's requests for** Douglas and Kayana. **Reposed Constance**— the mother of Andrew F. **Will**— reposed, Michael T.'s brother-in-law. **Reposed Andrei. Christian**— undergoing some medical testing. **Daniel**— a friend of our parish's florist, battling end of life illness. **Stacy**— hand surgery.

In the town of Catania, below the volcanic Mount Etna, lived St. Leo, a good shepherd and compassionate teacher of the people. He had great concern for the sick and the poor. His zeal for the Faith was as great as his charity toward the less fortunate. A magician named Heliodorus appeared in Catania and deluded the people with various illusions, greatly demoralizing the youth of the town. At one time during the divine services, Heliodorus entered the church of God and began his obscenities. St. Leo approached him, tied him to one end of his pallium, and led him to the market place of the city. Here Leo ordered that a large fire be built. When it was raging, he stood in the middle of the blaze and pulled Heliodorus into the fire. Heliodorus was completely consumed, but Leo remained alive and unscathed. All who had been bewitched by Heliodorus and who had looked upon him as someone divine, were ashamed. The compassionate and zealous Leo was proclaimed throughout the entire kingdom as a great miracle-worker, who helped men by his shining miracles. When Leo ended his course, he took up his habitation with the Lord, and from his relics there flowed healing myrrh. He reposed in the eighth century.

THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR [PRIESTLY-MARTYR] SADOK

Sadok was bishop in Persia after St. Simeon. Once St. Simeon appeared to him in a dream and said: "Yesterday, me--today, you!" Sadok interpreted these words to his flock as meaning: Last year I [St. Simeon] suffered, this year you [Sadok] will suffer. Indeed, that year King Sapor arrested him with many of the clergy and people and brought them to trial. Sapor first ordered them to worship fire and the sun as divinities. Sadok replied: "We are eagerly prepared to die for our God, but we can worship neither the sun nor fire." After that, they were tortured and sentenced to death by beheading. Before being beheaded, Sadok sent up a prayer to God: "Wash us from our sins, O Lord, in our blood!" Sadok and his priests and faithful gloriously gave up their bodies to death and their souls to the Immortal God. They suffered in the year 342 or 344 A.D.

REFLECTION

Water is finer than earth; fire is finer than water; air is finer than fire; electricity is finer than air. Nevertheless, air and electricity are dense elements in comparison to the spiritual world. Electricity is very fine, but the voice is finer than electricity; the thought finer than the voice; the spirit finer than thought. Air is fine and it carries the voice over a great distance. Electricity is fine and it carries light over a great distance. Nevertheless, how much more so is every deed, word and thought of yours carried to all ends of the spiritual world. Oh, how dreadful it is to commit sinful deeds and to speak sinful words and to think insane thoughts! To what immeasurable distances are waves amassed from this on the spiritual sea! But do not peer into the details of the unknown world. The main thing is that you know and measure how all your deeds, words and thoughts unavoidably create an impression on all four sides: on God and the spiritual world, on nature, on men, and on your soul. If you train yourself in this knowledge, you will attain a high level of saving vigilance.

Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, Compiled and edited by St. Nikolai Velimirovic)

"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)