

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

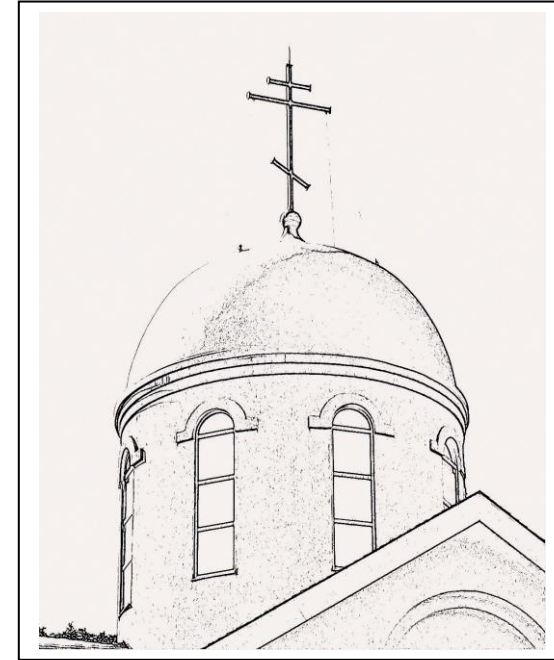
The parable of the Prodigal Son forms an exact icon of repentance at its different stages. Sin is exile, enslavement to strangers, hunger. Repentance is the return from exile to our true home; it is to receive back our inheritance and freedom in the Father's house. But repentance implies action: "I will rise up and go..." (v. 18). To repent is not just to feel dissatisfied, but to make a decision and to act upon it.

In the words of our Lord, we also learn of three things through this parable: the condition of the sinner, the rule of repentance, and the greatness of God's compassion. The reading of this parable follows the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee so that, seeing in the person of the Prodigal Son our own sinful condition, we might come to our senses and return to God through repentance. For those who have fallen into great despair over their sins thinking that there is no forgiveness, this parable offers hope. The Heavenly Father is patiently and lovingly waiting for our return. There is no sin that can overcome His love for us.

Finally, this parable offers us insight into the world in which we live. It is a world where the activities of people are disconnected and not ordered toward the fulfillment of God's divine purpose for life. It is a world of incoherent pursuits, of illusory strivings, of craving for foods and drinks that do not satisfy, a world where nothing ultimately makes sense, and a world engulfed in untruth, deceit and sin. It is the exact opposite of the world as created by God and potentially recreated by his Son and Spirit. There is no cure for the evils of our age unless we return to God. The world in which we live is not a normal world, but a wasteland. This is why in the Slavic tradition of the Orthodox Church the reading of Psalm 137 is added to the Matins service for this and the following two Sundays. This nostalgic lament of the Hebrew exiles states: "By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept as we remembered Zion. On the willows we hung our harps, for how could we sing the Lord's song in a strange land" (Psalm 137).

Here we can see the challenge of life in this world and the alienation from God that can happen when sin reigns in our lives. As a result of sin in our lives, we lose the joy of communion with God, we defile and lose our spiritual beauty, and we find ourselves far away from our real home, our real life. In true repentance, we realize this, and we express a deep desire to return, to recover what has been lost. On this day the Church reminds us of what we have abandoned and lost, and beckons us to find the desire and power to return. Our Heavenly Father is waiting and ready to receive us with His loving forgiveness and His saving embrace.

WEEKLY



BULLETIN

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!

Troparion of the Annunciation to the Theotokos

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

A Parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey of the Orthodox Church in America

360 Van Zile Road, Brick, New Jersey 08724

Phone: (732) 458-9032

Email: orthodoxbrick@gmail.com

Fax: (732) 295-0007

Website: www.orthodoxbrick.org

Very Rev. Fr. Gary Joseph Breton, *Rector*

Very Rev. Fr. Sergius Kuharsky, *Retired Attached Priest*

Very Rev. Fr. Paul Kucynda, *Retired Attached Priest*

Rev. Fr. Alexander Smida, *Attached Priest*

Rev. Fr. Michael Pejovic, *Attached Priest*

Matthew Petrides, *Senior Warden*

Reader Matthew Hascha, *Choir Director*

February 28, 2021
SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Tone 5. Ven. Basil the Confessor, Companion of Ven. Procopius at Decapolis (750). Bl. Nikolai, Fool-for-Christ at Pskov (1576). Hieromartyr Proterius, Patriarch of Alexandria (457). Hieromartyr Nestor, Bishop of Magydos in Pamphylia (250). Ven. Marina (Marana), Cyra (Kyra) and Domnica (Domnina), of Syria (ca. 450). Venerable Domnica (ca. 450). John Cassian the Roman (435). Devpeteruv Icon of the Mother of God (14th c.).

Today's Readings:

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Upcoming Service Schedule:

Today @ 9am Divine Liturgy

Saturday @ 6pm Great Vespers

Sunday @ 9am Divine Liturgy

Saturday @ 9am Divine Liturgy (*Memorial Saturday*)

Next Sunday's Readings:

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46



Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Keep up on OCA news by visiting www.oca.org, diocesan news and directives by visiting www.nynjoca.org, and parish news by visiting www.orthodoxbrick.org.

Special Prayers

We pray for **all** our parish family members, but we pray especially for those who are ill and afflicted. Among them are: **Betty James, Manya Shark, Deryl Tczap, Rdr. John Economou, Margaret Makara, Tom Kopec, Ann Marie Gahr, Dennis Gahr, Dorothy Studier, and Pauline Barnowsky.**

The Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors program is an essential vehicle for funding the activities and programs of our diocese. Please consider participating in the program. Brochures are located by the bulletin board in the parish hall or at the diocesan website at www.nynjoca.org.

Annunciations

TODAY – We are continuing a modified and controlled **Coffee Hour** ministry. The Parish Hall is set up to accommodate social distancing. Masks are required when traveling around the hall, but not when sitting and partaking of the refreshments. The hall will be sanitized after the Coffee Hour.

TODAY – The **young parishioners** will meet for their Church School session. The **teens** will have their class next Sunday.

WEDNESDAY – The **Inquirer group** will meet to discuss the essentials of the Orthodox Faith at 7pm in the Parish Hall. Those who cannot participate in person are welcome to join the discussion via Zoom. A link will be sent out to all parishioners. This week's topic will be the **Great Fast/Lent**.

NEXT SUNDAY – **Group 3** is invited to attend Divine Liturgy.

THIS SATURDAY is a **Memorial Saturday** as designated by the Church. Divine Liturgy will be served at 9:00am. If you have **names of the departed** that you have not previously submitted for commemoration, please do so before the Divine Liturgy.

Next Sunday is **Meatfare Sunday**, the last day that we should eat meat or meat products as we begin to prepare for the Great Fast which begins the following Sunday.

Parish Calendars for March 2021 have been sent out electronically. Please consult the calendar for services and events that will take place during the month. **Changes** to the calendar will be announced at Sunday Divine Liturgy and by email.

Grocery Gift Cards are available for purchase. Please contact Matushka Mary by email (matmaryb@gmail.com) or by phone at (848) 333-7075 to make arrangements.

Stewardship Donations may be brought to the church or mailed to the church address: 360 Van Zile Road, Brick, NJ 08724. On-line donations are possible by visiting our website for a link. Many thanks for continuing to support your parish in these challenging times.

MANY YEARS

Birthdays this week:

Today – Mat. Catherine Smida

Wednesday - Luke Pasick

Friday – Mat. Faith Kuharsky

Wedding Anniversaries this week:

Today – Lia & John Eickhorn

Please pray for vocations to the Holy Priesthood!