

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

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February 21, 2021

*31st Sunday after Pentecost - Tone 4
Publican & Pharisee. Fast-free Week
Ven. Timoty, St. Eustathius Abp. of Antioch*

- 9:10 am - Hours
- 9:30 am - Divine Liturgy, Panikhida.
2 Tim. 3:10-15
Luke. 18:10-14

Schedule of Services

Tuesday, February 23

- 7:00 pm - Akathist to Saint John,
Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord.

Friday, February 26

- 7:00 pm - Moleben to the Most
Holy Theotokos:

Saturday, February 27

- 5:00 pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, February 28

- 9:10 - Hours
- 9:30 - Divine Liturgy.



WEEKLY BIBLE MESSAG

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is the first Sunday of a three-week period prior to the commencement of Great Lent. It marks the beginning of a time of preparation for the spiritual journey of Lent, a time for Eastern Christians to draw closer to God through worship, prayer, fasting, and acts of charity. It is also on this day that the Triodion is introduced, a liturgical book that contains the services from this Sunday, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), to Great and Holy Saturday. The name for this Sunday is taken from the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ found in Luke 18:10-14. This is the story of two men, one a Pharisee, a member of a Jewish sect known for its diligent observance of the Law, and the other a Publican, a government official charged with the responsibility of collecting taxes. Both men enter the temple, and the Pharisee stands openly and prays, thanking God that he is not like other men, specifically extortioners, the unjust, adulterers, "or even this tax collector" (v. 11). He then begins to list his religious accomplishments by stating, "I fast twice a week, and I give tithes of all that I possess" (v. 12). In direct contrast to the pride of the Pharisee, the Publican goes to a place where he will not be noticed by others and beats his breast saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (v. 13). Having told this story, Jesus affirms that it was the Publican who returned home justified and forgiven rather than the Pharisee. He states, "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (v. 14). The theme of this parable is repentance. Repentance is the door through which we enter Lent, the starting-point of the journey to Pascha. To repent signifies far more than self-pity or futile regret over things done in the past.

The Greek term metanoia means "change of mind." To repent is to be renewed, to be transformed in our inward viewpoint, to attain a fresh way of looking at our relationship with God and with others. The fault of the Pharisee is that he has no desire to change his outlook; he is complacent, self satisfied, and so he allows no place for God to act within him. The Gospel depicts him as a man who is pleased only with himself and who thinks that he has complied with all of the requirements of religion. But in his pride, he has falsified the meaning of true religion and faith. He has reduced these to external observations, measuring his piety by the amount of money he gives. The Publican, on the other hand, truly longs for a "change of mind." He humbles himself, and his humility justifies him before God. He becomes, in the words of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3), "poor in spirit." He acknowledges that he is a sinner, and he knows that salvation is only found in the mercy of God. Here we find an example of true humility, an essential aspect of repentance. A "change of mind" and the transformation of our lives can only happen when we humble ourselves before God, acknowledge our willingness to turn from sin, and receive His grace into our lives. Our preparation for Lent thus begins with a prayer for humility, the beginning of true repentance. Through repentance, we can find and return to the true order of things, a restoration of our spiritual vision that will guide us in a very difficult and challenging world. By entering Great Lent in humility and repentance, we can attain deeper communion with God as we receive His forgiveness and He blesses us by guiding us to greater spiritual heights.

Intercessory Prayers

We pray for all our fellow parishioners, and we pray especially for those who are incapable of being with us in church. Please keep in your prayers our Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Genevieve Bobenko, Barbara Bogart, Michael Bzik, Mary Ann Dolak, Dorothy Fabian, Barbara Kary, Margaret Kovalycsik, Kathleen Lazorzcyk, Dennis Maixner, Marian Nagel, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Maryann Sytagen, Eva Stashisky, Patricia Galley.

Announcement

♦ **With Sympathy** Our condolences go out to **Stephen Fabien** and his wife **Dorothy** on the passing away of Stephen's sister **Margaret Brizek** on Friday, February 12. May the love and peace of Christ bring them strength and comfort in this time of need.

♦ **Memorial (Soul) Saturdays** On certain Saturdays of the year, the commemoration of the dead is prescribed. In the Church, we all depend on each other, belong to each other and are united by the love of Jesus Christ, even with those who have preceded us in death. Remembering departed relatives and others among the faithful who have fallen asleep in the Lord is an act of love that we should never neglect. This year, there are six Memorial (Soul) Saturdays: **Mar 6 & 27, Apr 3 & 10, Jun 19** and **Oct 23**. The Panikhida on each of these days will be serve. A form to list the names of those you want mentioned is included in today's bulletin; there're also extra copies available at the Candle Desk. Once completed, you can either drop it off in church or send it to the rectory; even better, attend these services yourself to experience the beauty and meaning of these days in the place where our brothers and sisters worshipped before they were laid to pious rest.

