

From the Divine Office for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Brethren, our purpose is to know the power of God's Goodness: how when the Prodigal Son gave up sin and hastened to his father's house, his kindly father welcomed him and kissed him and marked him with signs of honor. He manifested his mystical joy to the inhabitants of Heaven by killing the fatted calf in order that we too may do what is right before the Sacrificer, the Father and Lover and Mankind, and the Victim, the glorious Savior of our souls. (Vespers)

Our Savior teaches us daily with His own words. Let us therefore heed the Scripture lesson of the Prodigal who came to his senses. With faith, let us follow his good example of repentance. With a humble heart, let us cry aloud to Him who knows all secrets: "We have sinned against You, O merciful Father! We do not deserve to be called Your children ever again. But since You are the Lover of Mankind, receive me now that I repent and make me as one of Your hired servants!" (Orthros)



**SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON
JANUARY 31, 2021**



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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (3rd)

1: Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us shout with joy to God our Savior.

O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia

2: Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving and let us joyfully sing psalms to Him.

Khallisna Ya-Bnallah, Ya Man qama min baynil-amwaat, nahnu muranneemeena Laka.

Haleloueya.

3: For God is a great Lord and a great King over all the earth.

O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia.

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ.

People: **O Son of God, Who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to you Alleluia!**

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 2, pg. 38)

When You descended to death, O immortal Life, You put Hades to death by the splendor of Your divinity. And when You raised the dead from below the earth, all the heavenly powers cried out to You: "O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!"

Troparion of the Dormition (Tone 1, Pg 15)

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep, you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life, being the Mother of Life. Through your intercessions, save our souls from death.

Kondakion of the Prodigal Son (Tone 3)

In my foolish wretchedness I ran away from Your glory, and I squandered wickedly the riches You have given me. And so now, like the Prodigal Son, I cry out to You: "I have sinned in Your sight, Merciful Father: receive me now that I repent and make me as one of Your hired servants."

Kondakion of the Encounter (Tone 2)

O Christ our God who through Your birth have sanctified the virginal womb, and have blessed the arms of Simeon. You have come today to save us. When wars prevail keep Your people in peace and strengthen our public authorities in every good deed, for You alone are the Lover of Mankind.

In this the father is unlike many of us who would want the ungrateful son to squirm before accepting him back home. We might feel justified in "teaching him a lesson," but this is apparently not God's way. When repentance truly touches the heart, the "lesson" has already been learned.

The Father's extraordinary mercy is no excuse for taking advantage of Him: seeking the blessing of His house while not repenting in action as well as in words. As St Isaac the Syrian taught, "But the fact that repentance furnishes hope should not be taken by us as a means to rob ourselves of the feeling of fear, so that one might more freely and fearlessly commit sin" (Isaac the Syrian, First Collection: Homily Ten).

Proclaiming the Mercy of God

Our liturgy continually emphasizes the mercy of God. The beloved Polyeleos psalm sung so frequently in our churches at the most solemn occasions has as its refrain, "For His mercy endures forever, alleluia" The Typica psalms each proclaim the depths of God's mercy to His People: "*He forgives all your iniquity, he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy*" (Ps 102: 3, 4).

The second psalm is even more specific: "*He brings about justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the strangers, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin*" (Ps 146:7-9).

Is it unreasonable to think that we, who continually sing of God's mercy in our services, should not be encouraging one another to return to the Father by attending the Church's Lenten services, by approaching the Mystery of Confession and by embracing the ideas in "The Great Fast in the Home," available on our eparchy's web site, www.melkite.org

As the Lord said in the parables which precede the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance... *Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents*" (Lk 15:7, 10).

St. Cyril of Alexandria on the Parable

"What then is the object of the parable? Let us examine the occasion which led to it; for so we shall learn the truth. The blessed Luke therefore had himself said a little before of Christ the Savior of us all, '*And all the publicans and sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.*' As therefore the Pharisees and Scribes made this outcry at His gentleness and love to man, and wickedly and impiously blamed Him for receiving and teaching men whose lives were impure, Christ very necessarily set before them the present parable, to show them clearly this very thing: that ... when any are called to repentance, even if they be men highly blamable, he must rejoice, and not give way to an unloving vexation on their account...."

"For sometimes people are indignant at this, and even say, 'This man, who has been guilty of such and such actions... has been inscribed among the sons of God, and honored with the glory of the saints!' Such complaints come from an empty narrowness of mind, not conforming to the purpose of the universal Father. For He greatly rejoices when He sees those who were lost obtaining salvation, and raises them up again to that which they were in the beginning, giving them the garment of freedom.."

"It is our duty, therefore, to conform ourselves to that which God wills: for He heals those who are sick... He seeks those who were lost; He raises as from the dead those who had suffered spiritual death. Let us also rejoice and, together with the holy angels, praise Him who is good, and the Lover of mankind."

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +Philip Jordan. Requested by Francis & Carol Boyda

Feb 7 Health and Salvation of Dick Abraham. Requested by Ron Abraham.

+**Patricia Cronican.** Requested by Antonio & Karen Solitro and Michael & Virginia Mischitelli.

+**Philip Jordan.** Requested by Ron & Dick Abraham

Feb 14 Nan Nejaimey (1yr.), Charles & Lena (Esper) Nejaimey, Thomas & Irene (Ryan) Kelly, Katherine (Nejaimey) Kleimer. Requested by James Nejaimey & family.

Liturgical Schedule

Tue, Feb 2, 6PM - Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Encounter w/Blessing of Candles

Sat, Feb 6, 10AM - Divine Liturgy for the Saturday of the Dead. Please send Fr. Bryan the names of anyone you would like to have remembered this day.

Great Lent begins Monday, February 15. We will pray Great Compline on Mondays, Presanctified Liturgy on Wednesdays, and the Akathist Hymn on Fridays. All services will be at 6PM, unless otherwise announced,.

Last Week's Collection

Regular	\$1,096
Stole	\$ 20
Candles	\$ 18
Donations	\$1,000
Total	\$2,134

Thanks to all who have continued to contribute to the church during the pandemic, whether in person or by mail. It costs approximately \$8,000 per month for us to cover our financial obligations. As I have stated before, your contributions have made it unnecessary to access our savings in order to pay bills. Please don't think of your contributions as "dues" but as giving back to God a gift of thanksgiving for everything He has given you!

Remember the Melkite Church in Your Will: Give a lasting gift for future generations of Melkites and help to ensure that our beautiful Melkite heritage continues to grow and flourish for your children's children. Simply add the following statement to your last will and testament: *I hereby bequeath to the Melkite Eparchy of Newton the following sum: \$_____.* Contact Bishop NICHOLAS personally to inform him of your generous bequest: 3 VFW Parkway, West Roxbury, MA 02132.

Welcome to Fr. Philip Raczka, Protosyncellus of the Eparchy and Rector of Annunciation Cathedral who is celebrating the Divine Liturgy this morning.

Mystery of Icons

Introduction into the Theology and Spirituality of the Icon in the Byzantine Tradition

(February 22 - March 6, 3:00 - 4:45 PM EST)

A short, but intensive course on the history, theology and spirituality of icons. We will trace the development of Eastern Christian iconographic tradition through its main stages, look at its most remarkable phenomena, and try to understand theological and spiritual appeal of icons through the ages.

To learn more about this Free Course, hosted by the ECF Office of Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic and how to join it either live or watch its recordings please visit:



“This Man Receives Sinners”

EACH YEAR, AS WE PREPARE to embark upon the Great Fast, we hear the Lord’s parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32) read at the Divine Liturgy. Some commentators have said that the story might better be called the Parable of the Forgiving Father as he is the most important character in the story. Actually the parable speaks about the character of God, (the father) and the human condition (both his sons). It thus sets the stage for our Lenten journey of repentance.

The Prodigal Son and Our Human Condition

We are not told the exact age of the young man when he decides to set off on his own, but countless commentators have depicted him as an adolescent. His behavior certainly bears this out. He has the selfish impatience of youth: he wants his inheritance now, even though his father is still alive. He is more interested in what the man’s money can buy than in the man himself.

In that, the young man repeats the choice made by our first parents who preferred the appetizing but forbidden fruit to continued fellowship with the One who provided it. He also images the choices we all make when we focus our attention on the fruits of creation rather than on the Creator who offers us a relationship with Himself. In any such choice we become the petulant adolescent whose first stabs at maturity always seem to require resentment of the parent if not outright rebellion.

On his own the Prodigal’s newfound independence seems to lead him into slavery rather quickly. He living what various translations call a “wild,” “reckless,” “loose” “riotous” “foolish,” “notorious,” “dissolute,” “wasteful,” or “prodigal” way of life. We are left to imagine what that might have involved; we certainly know what the result was. He spent everything he had and ended up with nothing. He wanted to be independent but did not understand that being independent does not free a person from being responsible.

No well-balanced person in our world wants to be dependent on another. We often forget, however, that our desire for human self-determination cannot lead us away from God without disastrous results. We inevitably end up spiritually bankrupt and living on the pig’s fodder of a Godless world.

Unlike many people, however, the Prodigal does something about his condition: he returns to his father. He repents. Still thinking of himself and his own needs, he plans to plead for the lowest place in his father’s household. The young man does not know with whom he is dealing.

The Forgiving Father and the Mercy of God

The father does not wait for his son to apologize or beg for forgiveness. He welcomes him home with open arms and calls for a celebration. He is the image of our heavenly Father who knows when one of His children seeks forgiveness and grants it at once, without demanding any form of penance or satisfaction.

Note that the father does not go in search of his son when the lad is enjoying the wasteful life he has chosen or when he is miserable, but not yet resolved to return home. His mercy would bear fruit only when the son had come to truly desire it and so the father waits for his son to make the first move. But when the son does return, the father does not make him work for forgiveness; he gives it freely.

Prokimenon

Reader: May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in you.

People: May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in you.

Verse: Exult, you just, in the Lord; praise from the upright is fitting.

People: May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in you.

Reader: May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us,

People: For we have hoped in you.

Epistle: 1Cor 6:12-20

Alleluia Verses

O God, you granted me retribution and made peoples subject to me and saved me from my raging enemies.

Verse: Therefore I will proclaim you, O Lord, among the nations, and I will sing praise to your name.

Gospel: Lk 15:11-32, Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Special Petitions for the Ecumenic Prayer (Inserted after the third petition)

- For all your people who have proven positive with the coronavirus, that they may be restored to full health and offer you their praise and thanksgiving, we pray to you, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For all those who have died as a result of the coronavirus that they may be granted rest with the Saints and the mercy of God in the Heavenly Kingdom, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For doctors, nurses, and all in health care, risking their lives to minister to those afflicted with the coronavirus, that they remain safe, and in good health as they serve others, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For all your people in Lebanon who were hurt during the disastrous explosion, that they may be restored to full health, and for those who died that they may be granted rest among the Saints, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.
- For peace throughout the Middle East, especially in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, we pray to You, Lord, hear us and have mercy.