

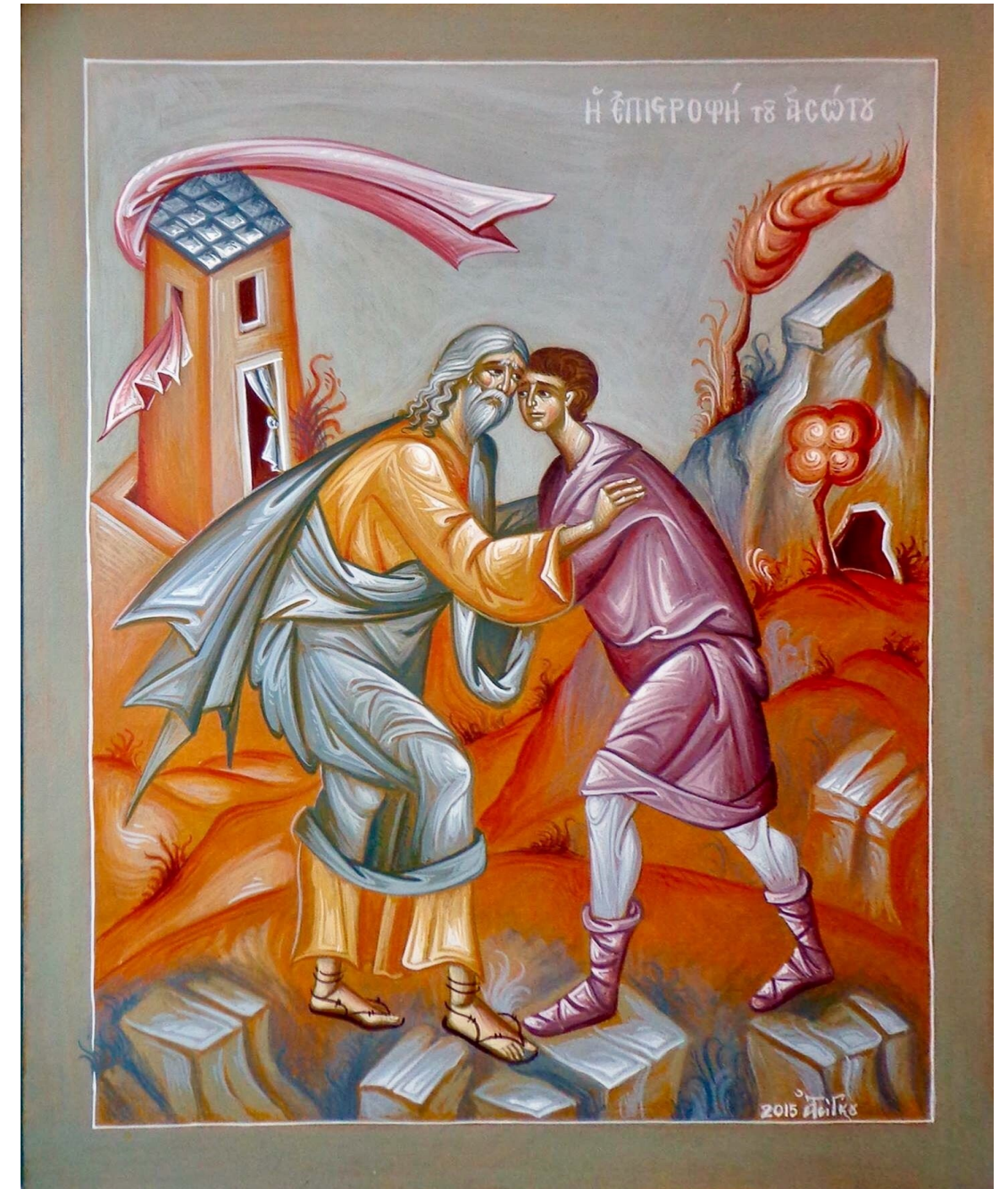
From the Divine Office for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son

*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 the 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 sacrifice the Father and the Lover of 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
FEBRUARY 5, 2023**



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (Encounter)

1- Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One!

O Son of God who were carried in the arms of Simeon the Just, save us who sing to You: Alleluia

2- In Your splendor and majesty, ride triumphant in the cause of truth and for the sake of justice.

O Son of God who were carried in the arms of Simeon the Just, save us who sing to You: Alleluia

3- Your arrows are sharp; peoples are subject to You; the king's enemies lose heart. A tempered rod is your royal scepter.

O Son of God who were carried in the arms of Simeon the Just, save us who sing to You: Alleluia

Entrance Hymn

Priest: The Lord has made his Salvation known in the sight of all the Nations.

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 Encounter (Tone 1)

Hail, O Full of grace, Virgin and Mother of God: from you has arisen the Sun of Justice, Christ our God, enlightening those who dwell in darkness. You too, O just Elder Simeon, rejoice, for you carried in your arms the Redeemer of our souls, who grants us Resurrection.

Patronal Troparion (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 intercession, save our souls from death.

Kontakion of the Pharisee and the Publican (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 now that I repent, and make me as one of Your hired servants."

Many people addicted to alcohol, drugs or other self-destructive behaviors come to the same realization when they bottom out. Their recovery process begins when they accept responsibility for their condition and seek to make amends. We may recognize the similarity of an addict to the Prodigal, but fail to see the comparison with ourselves.

All of us are far from home, perhaps not because of addiction but because of sin. The sin of Adam – seeking to live independently of God – is replicated in the lives of each of us in one way or another. Mankind wants the inheritance – all that we receive from God – but does not value a relationship with the Father. The difference is that while a recovering addict, like the Prodigal, has a clear sense of his addiction, we may be unaware of our loss because we have not hit bottom. We may not realize that being away from the Father's house is in fact to be in exile.

The Forgiving Father and the Mercy of God

Still thinking of himself and his own needs, the son in the parable plans to plead for the lowest place in his father's household. The young man does not know with whom he is dealing. 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.

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.

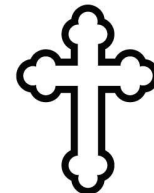
The Father's extraordinary mercy is no excuse for taking advantage of Him: seeking the blessing of His house while not repenting in action as well as in words. As St Isaac the Syrian taught, "But the fact that repentance furnishes hope should not be taken by us as a means to rob ourselves of the feeling 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 [Type text] the wicked he brings to ruin*" (Ps 146:7-9). Coincidentally it is precisely these psalms, so familiar to the faithful of our Church, which Pope Francis cited in the letter opening his "Year of Mercy."

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).



DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +Diane Moossa (40 Day). Requested by her family
+Sandra Aboody
Feb 12 HS Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Elaine Foley. Requested by
Antoinette Arraj and family

This week's Coffee is hosted by the family of Diane Moossa
Next week's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Joe & Lorraine Lian

Please remember in your prayers: George Arraj, Jr., Ron Abraham, Peter Abraham, Vi Gazal, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Anthony Poti, Katherine Thomas, Charlotte Stockhaus, Ruth Welsh, Richard Abraham, Sr., Daneil Sarrouf, Bob Lynch, Michael Mooradian, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Wyatt William Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Elaine Foley, and the people of Ukraine.

If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$ 1,676
Candles	\$ 27
Coffee Hr.	\$ 59
Memorials	\$ 140
Stole	\$ 400
Flowers	\$ 30
TOTAL	\$ 2,332

God bless you for your generosity!



I will be in San Antonio, TX next week for the annual Clergy Conference. I'll be back very late on Thursday evening. If you need to reach me, please call my cellphone (978) 314-1962.

Please pray for Bishop Francois and the clergy of the Eparchy!

Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.

Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.



HOUSE BLESSINGS

The post-Theophany period is the traditional time for blessing homes. If you would like me to come and bless your home, please see me after the Divine Liturgy or contact me at (978) 314-1962 (Brymc56@comcast.net).

I would love to come and spend some time with you!
Fr. Bryan

ADULT EDUCATION

Our adult education series began this past **Tuesday, January 31**. Our text is Fr. Justin Rose's book "Come, Follow Me." It is a Byzantine Christian approach to evangelization and disciple-making. We will meet weekly as we make our way through the book (**except for Feb. 7**). This theme fits in well with Bishop Francois' motto: Becoming Disciples, Making Disciples. **Please bring your Bible. We have the books.** If you couldn't make it last week, it's not too late. Our next session is **February 14**.

UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Sat 2/11, 10AM Divine Liturgy & Memorial Service for Saturday of the Dead

Please give me the names of any deceased family or friends you would like remembered at this Liturgy and Memorial Service.

CHEESFARE POT LUCK

February 19 is Cheesefare Sunday. We will have a potluck brunch that day. Please bring your favorite meatless dish to share.

Looking for the Way Home (Luke 15:11-32)

ON THE FIRST FEW SUNDAYS of the Triodion Psalm 137 is chanted before the Gospel at Orthros. Describing the plight of Jewish exiles in the seventh century BC, it begins with this verse: *“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.”*

When the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 597 BC they deported the defeated Jewish king along with nobles and important craftsmen to Babylon. In response to successive revolts the Babylonians destroyed the temple and deported even more people.

The forced exile ended in 538 BC after the fall of Babylon to the Persian king Cyrus the Great, who gave the Jews permission to return to Judea and to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

This theme of exile comes to the fore today as the Church asks us to consider that we too are exiles, not from the Kingdom of Judah but from the Kingdom of God. The difference is that, while the deported Jews knew that they were exiles, we are largely unaware of it or unconcerned about it. We are doing reasonably well, our lives are satisfying and we are confident that things are getting better and better every day. But the Church holds up before us this image of exile so that we may realize that we are far from home, we are not where we are meant to be. This realization is the first step in the Lenten journey to find our way back to God.

We Are the Prodigal Son

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 begins 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. First, the Prodigal saw his situation for what it was. He came to realize that he was at the bottom and things couldn’t get much worse. Secondly he thought about the home he had forsaken. Finally he made the decision and acted upon it: “I will arise and go to my father” (Lk 15:18). He repents.

Like the deported Jews the Prodigal came to see himself as exiled. But while the Jews had been forcibly deported to Babylon and could not return home, the Prodigal had exiled himself from his true home. He was therefore able to pick himself up and embark on the journey back. He rightly saw his need to admit his wrongdoing and express his sorrow. *“I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’”* (Lk 15: 18-19).

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.

Reader: 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: 1 Cor. 6:12-20

Alleluia

O God, You granted me retribution and make 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

Hirmos of the Encounter (Tone 3)

O Mother of God, hope of all Christians, watch over those who have placed their hope in you. Let us, O faithful, glorify the First-born, the Eternal Word of God, born of a Virgin all-pure, for we have seen, beyond the shadow and letter of the Law, a sign of Christ in the words: “Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.”

Kinonikon

I will take the chalice of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. Alleluia!

