

## A Russian Tale

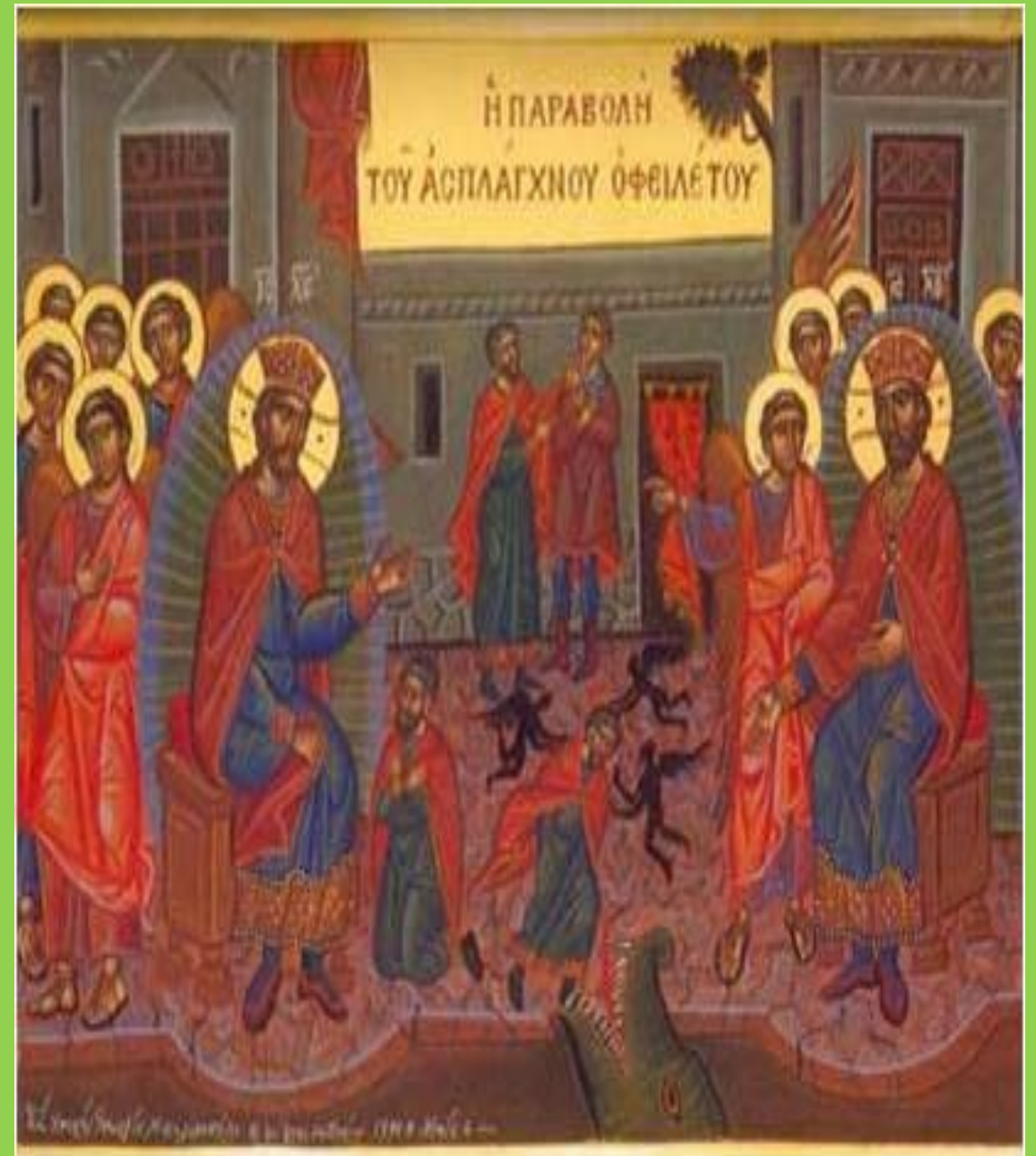
St. Titus the Presbyter was a twelfth-century priest in the monastery of the Kiev Caves who fell into a hateful relationship with a deacon named Evagrius. So spiteful was their relationship that whenever one of them used the censer in church, the other would turn and leave. They were blinded by hatred to such an extent, that they dared to take Holy Communion without asking for forgiveness and reconciliation.

One day, Titus became so ill that everyone thought he was going to die. Titus begged that Evagrius be brought to his bedside so that they might reconcile. Evagrius was finally taken there by force but said that he would not forgive his brother, neither in this world nor in the next.

Suddenly Evagrius died and Titus got up from his bed healed. Titus revealed that he saw demons flying about his bed until he resolved to forgive Evagrius. The demons then fled and attacked Evagrius while the angels of God surrounded Titus.

You be careful as well, brother, and do not let the demon of anger corrupt you. One, who listens to him at least once, will be enslaved by him.

**ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
AUGUST 25, 2019**



**PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT**

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church**  
256 Hamilton St.  
Worcester, MA 01604  
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199  
Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com  
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor  
Email: Brymc56@comcast.net Cell: (978) 314-1962  
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.  
**O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia**
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!

**Resurrectional Troparion (Tone 2, Pg. 38)**

When You descended to death, O immortal Life, You destroyed Hades 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!”

**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 Nativity of the Mother of God (Tone 4)**

Through your holy birth, O Immaculate One, Joachim and Anne were delivered from the shame of childlessness, and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death. Your people, redeemed from the debt of their sins, cry out to you to honor your birth: “the barren one gives birth to the Mother of God the Sustainer of our life!”

**Prokimenon**

**Reader:** My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior.

**People:** My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior.

**Reader:** The Lord has chastised me through His teaching, yet He has not delivered me to death

**People:** My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior.

**Reader:** My strength and my courage is the Lord, .

**People:** And He has been my Savior.

**Epistle: 1 Cor 9: 2-12**

**Alleluia Verses**

The Lord shall hear you on the day of distress: the name of the God of Jacob shall defend you.

**Verse:** O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance.

**Gospel: Matthew Matthew 18:23-35**

**Kiss of Peace (Pg. 23)**

**Priest:** Christ is among us!

**People:** He is and always will be!

**Then offer the kiss of peace to the person on your right and left using the greeting above.**

**Hirmos - “It is truly meet...” (Pg. 26)**

**Kinonikon: “Praise the Lord...” (Pg. 32)**



## DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

**Today** +**Zakia Assaf** (2 yr). Requested by Sam Francis and Family  
Coffee and...sponsored by Sam Francis and Family

**Sep 8** +**Bishop John Adel Elya** (40 day). Requested by family of Annie & Salim Abraham

- **The Joseph and Nejaimey families**, living and deceased.  
Requested by the Joseph Family

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ◆ Katherinbe Delnore fell asleep in the Lord on August 20. Her wake will be on Wednesday, August 28 from 5:00PM to 8:00PM at Nordgren Memorial Chapel, 300 Lincoln St., Worcester. The funeral service will be at 10:00AM on Thursday, August 29 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help. May her memory be eternal!
- ◆ Last Week's Attendance/Donations: **40/\$1,384**
- ◆ Our annual Parish Picnic is just two week's away (**September 8**)! Please return your donation/volunteer slip, if you have not done so. We need volunteers for food preparation, setting up and breaking down tables and chairs, and a number of other tasks. Please see Ginny Mischitelli and put your name on the volunteer list. We also need donations of raffle prizes. Your donations and volunteer efforts help to make the Picnic a success!
- ◆ **Workers Needed** - We need volunteers to help with Bingo on Tuesday evenings. Please see Joe Najemy if you would like to volunteer.

## Bishop Nicholas' 30th Anniversary Celebration

On Thursday, **October 3rd**, Our Lady of Annunciation Cathedral will host a celebration in honor of Sayinda Nicholas' 30th Anniversary of episcopal ordination, 50th Anniversary of priestly ordination, as well as his 75th Birthday. The Divine Liturgy will begin at 5:00pm followed by a banquet at 7:00pm. Tickets are \$50 per person and must be purchased in advance. **No tickets will be sold at the door.** Please see the flyer in the most recent edition of **Sophia** for more details. There are also copies of the flyer in the narthex of the church. The deadline to purchase tickets is **September 20, 2019**. It would be wonderful to have a strong representation from OLPH at the Liturgy and Banquet.

Welcome to those who are visiting today. We are happy to have you worship with us. If this is your first time here, please come downstairs to the Hall, introduce yourself, have some refreshments, and get to know the Community. If you have any questions about the Melkite Church and its traditions, please don't hesitate to ask Fr. Bryan.

Weddings — One year notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Baptisms — One month notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Please let Fr. Bryan know of anyone who is sick, in the hospital, or homebound so that he can visit and bring them the Eucharist on a regular basis.

If you or your children have graduated from high school, college, or a post secondary program, please let Fr. Bryan know. He would like to include their names in the bulletin to acknowledge their accomplishments. He would like to do this in September. Notice may be sent to [olphmelkite@gmail.com](mailto:olphmelkite@gmail.com) or by calling (978) 314-1962. Better yet, come and see Fr. Bryan after the Divine Liturgy.



## The Heart of the Gospel

WHAT IS THE HARDEST THING to accept in Christianity? Is it the doctrine of the Trinity? The idea that God became man? Or that the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ? While these teachings may meet with obstacles in our minds, the hardest thing for us to accept in practice is the absolute need to forgive others.

In our broken humanity we are much more at home with seeking vengeance. We are often more comfortable with the pre-Christian vision of a vengeful God: “*And the LORD said to him, ‘Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold’*” (Gen 4:15).

The Torah enshrined the concept of vengeance in its laws concerning violence: “*But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe*” (Ex 21:23-25). While modern law is not as demanding, it still endorses the idea of vengeance, clothed in modern dress as “Justice” and “Closure” (which often comes down to a question of money). Perhaps the best comment on this principle is by the Lebanese author Kahlil Gibran, “An eye for an eye, and the whole world would be blind.”

### Forgiveness: the Heart of the Gospel

Contemporary Catholic writer Scott Hurd describes the Gospel ideal of forgiveness as “...both the central idea of Christianity, and an assault on the conventional human understanding of justice.” It is an “assault” because it challenges the very nature of the world’s way of handling things. It is the heart of our faith because it is the basic attitude of God toward us and the model of how we can act as the images of God.

“Yours it is to show mercy...” we say to God in many prayers, because He is by nature the forgiving Father, the One who runs to welcome home His prodigal children after they stray. God incarnate in Jesus Christ expresses this forgiveness in His humanity when He prayed for His killers, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (Lk 23:34). And so it is in imitation of God that His disciple, the Protomartyr St Stephen, prayed for those who delivered him to death: “*And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep*” (Acts 7:59-60).

That forgiveness is required, not an option, in the Christian life we see from the Lord’s words in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ would come back to this theme again and again, doubtless more often than the Gospels record:

- “*Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you*” (Lk 6:37-38).

- “*Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him*” (Lk 17:3-4).

Forgiveness is particularly necessary when we presume to pray: “*And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses*” (Mk 11:25-26).

Forgiveness is indispensable when we look to make an oblation: “*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift*” (Mt 5:23-24).

The kiss of peace at the Eucharist of all the historic Churches is a rite based on this requirement of the Lord.

### The Parable of the Unjust Debtor

In story form, this passage – unique to Matthew – repeats the Lord’s fundamental teaching that forgiving others is a prerequisite for being forgiven by God.

The call for the godly-minded to forgive others was already common in late Judaism, but in a limited way. Thus the second century rabbinic scholar Issi ben Judah wrote, “If a man commits an offence once, they forgive him; if he commits an offence a second time, they forgive him; if he commits an offence a third time, they forgive him; the fourth time they do not forgive.” Rabbi Yossi bar Hanina, writing in the second half of the third century AD counsels, “He who begs forgiveness from his neighbor must not do so more than three times.”

By this standard, Peter was being downright generous when he suggested forgiving seven times as the new standard. Christ replies by turning around Lamech’s rule of vengeance (“*If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold*” – Gen 4:24). Now, Christ says, consider forgiving others seventy times seven, a number meaning “without limit.”

St John Chrysostom saw a particularly damning indictment of the tendency to hold grudges or seek vengeance in this parable. Pointing to the fate of the unforgiving servant, Christ says, “*So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses*” (Mt 18:35). Chrysostom offers this interpretation: “Note that He did not say ‘your Father’ but ‘my Father’ for it is not proper for God to be called the Father of one who is so wicked and malicious” (*Homily on Matthew* 61, 4).

These harsh words go unheard by many in the Church who hold grudges, often for many years. People often feel that broken relationships have nothing to do with our faith. In reality our unwillingness to forgive says that we think God is a sucker for being so compassionate: we know better. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said, the rift is with more than our relative or neighbor. “For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.”