

From the Divine Office for the Commemoration of Our Fathers Among the Saint & Great Ecumenical Teachers, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian & John Chrysostom (Jan. 30)

Let us fittingly honor Basil, Gregory and John, as instruments of the grace of God, harps of the Spirit and sweet-sounding trumpets of theology! From on high, their admirable preaching announced the awesome mysteries; as three satellites proclaiming the great Trinity, they spoke of the glory of God to the ends of the earth. (Vespers)

With our hymns let us all praise those vessels of light, those radiant flashes of lightning, the three Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and the golden mouth which was John.

O Divinity whose Persons are united, Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Do not allow me to be separated from Your glory, through the intercessions of Your holy Basil, Gregory and John, and by the prayers of the pure Theotokos. (Exapostilaria)



SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

JANUARY 28, 2024



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
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Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
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Rev. Deacon Elias Bailey
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!

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.

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.”

Kontakion of the Presentation of our Lord (Tone 1)

O Christ our God, who through your birth have sanctified the virginal womb, and have blessed the arms of Simon, 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.

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 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 **Richard (Tubby) Nejaimey (2yr.)** Requested by his family
+Katherine Thomas
+Thomas Syseskey

Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by the family of **Richard Nejaimey**
Next week's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by **Maria Filewicz**

Please remember in your prayers: Lorraine Lian, George Arraj, Jr., Ron Abraham, Peter Abraham, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplains, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Tom Sarrouf, Sandra Hanlan, Melissa Kalpakgian, Susan Bailey, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in the Middle East.

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	\$ 491
Coffee Hr.	\$ 80
Candles	\$ 50
Stole	\$ 600
Memorials	\$ 10
TOTAL	\$ 1,232



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.



BISHOP'S APPEAL

The Bishop's Appeal is in full swing. Please prayerfully consider making a donation to support the important work of the Diocese. If every family donated \$100 the Appeal would generate over one million dollars.

You can donate by using the letter you received or by going to www.melkite.org and clicking on the Donate button.

God bless you for your generosity!

HOUSE BLESSINGS

If you would like to have your house blessed, please contact Fr. Bryan to arrange a date and time. It is a blessing to be able to spend time with you outside of Sunday morning.

Call me @ 774-502-8547 or email me @ olphmelkite@gmail.com.

God bless you!



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 Verses

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

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

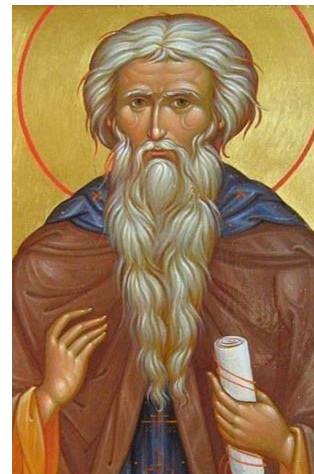
Gospel: Lk. 15:11-32, Sunday of the Prodigal Son

UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Thu, Feb. 1, 6PM—Great Vespers for Hypapanty (Encounter)

Fri, Feb. 2, 6PM-Divine Liturgy for the Hypapanty w/Blessing of Candles

February 3 is the 1st Saturday of the Dead. We will have a Memorial Service after the Divine Liturgy on February 2. If there are people you want to remember at the service, please put their names on the sheet in the Hall.



Everything we do, our every objective, must be undertaken for the sake of... purity of heart... we must practice the reading of the Scripture, together with all the other virtuous activities... to hold our hearts free of the harm of every dangerous passion and in order to rise step by step to the high point of love.

St. John Cassian

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