

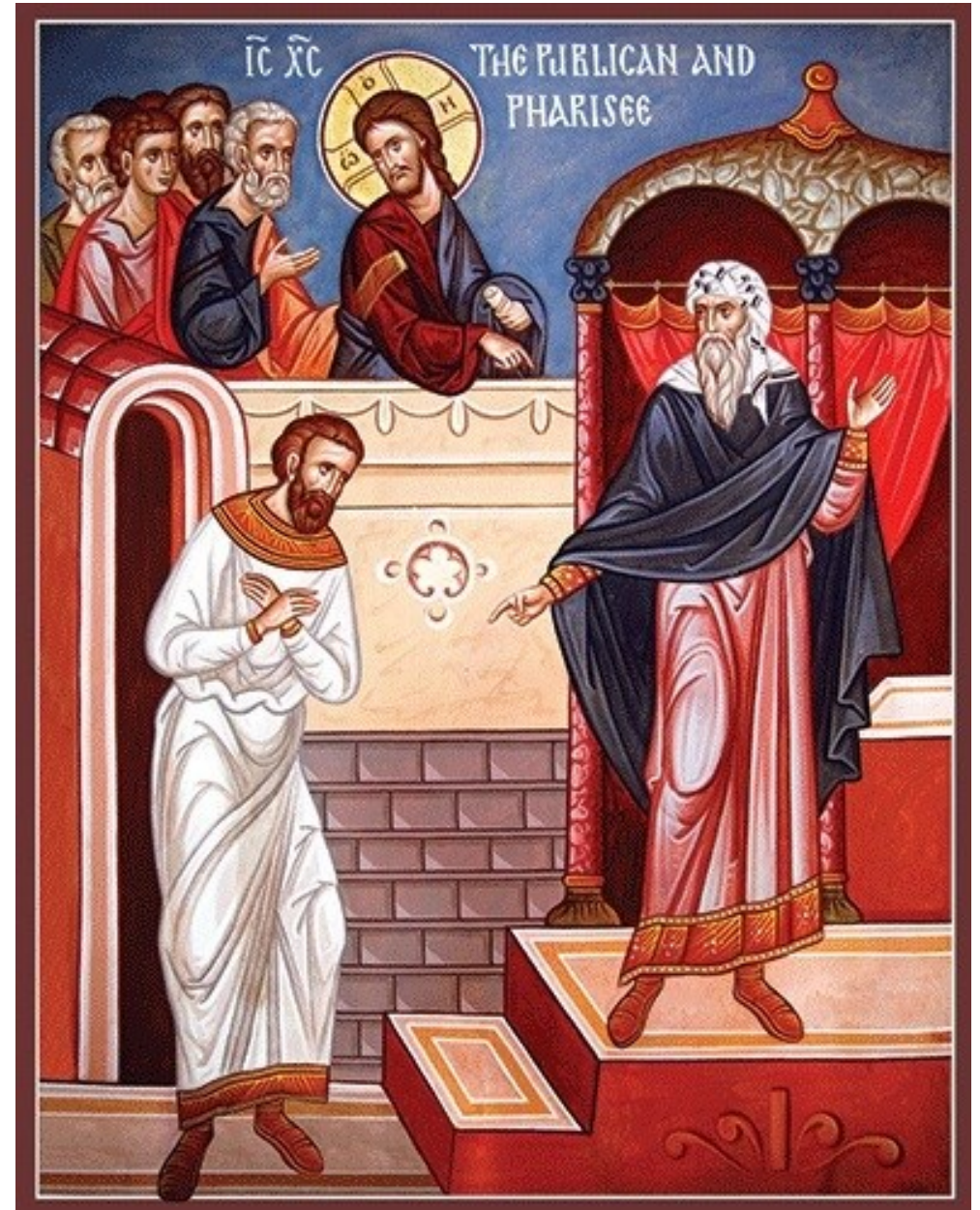
From the Divine Office for the Pharisee & the Publican

When the Pharisee went up to the Temple in his vainglory and the Publican bowed in repentance they both stood before You, O Master! The one lost his reward through boasting, while the other won Your blessing through his sighs. Because I too am sighing in Your presence, strengthen me, Christ God, for You are the Lover of Mankind. (Vespers)

Brethren: let us all humble ourselves. Let us stir up our conscience with sighing and lamentation, that we may be counted among the faithful and the just, and find forgiveness. Let us pray that we may see the true peace of the Age to Come, where there is no pain, no grief, no sighing, in that wondrous Eden fashioned by Christ, for He is God, coeternal with the Father. (Ikos)



**SUNDAY OF THE PHARISEE & THE PUBLICAN
FEBRUARY 9, 2025**



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church

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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (Feast)

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

P: The Lord has made his Salvation known; He has revealed his justice to all nations.

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

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 5) Pg.4

Let us, O faithful, praise and worship the word, coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our Salvation, for He was pleased to be lifted in the flesh upon the cross, and to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious resurrection.

Troparion of the Feast (2 times), (1st. Tone)

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

Kontakion of the Pharisee and the Publican (Tone 3)

Let us shun the boastful words of the Pharisee and learn from the Publican humility with sighing; let us cry out to our Savior: "Have mercy on us, O You who alone are merciful!"

Humility Transforms Us

The antidote to the boastfulness of the Pharisee is humility which is nothing less than a return to the genuine order of things, the restoration of a realistic view of ourselves and of God. Only He can transform us by granting us a share in His divine life. Of ourselves we can do nothing to earn God's love or to share in His holiness. We can only respond to His eternal love for us by embarking on the path of repentance – that dying to self-love and egocentricity which leads us to life in the kingdom.

Humility – authentic self-understanding – doesn't come easily at any time. It is deeply opposed to the values of the world. The late Father Alexander Schmemmann saw how humility has no place in our secular culture. He wrote: "If there is a moral quality almost completely disregarded and even denied today, it is indeed humility. The culture in which we live constantly instills in us the sense of pride, self-glorification, and self-righteousness. It is built on the assumption that man can achieve anything by himself and it even pictures God as the one who all the time 'gives credit' for man's achievements and good deeds. Humility – be it individual or corporate, ethnic or national – is viewed as a sign of weakness, as something unbecoming a real man. ..."

Our culture also teaches us to feel superior when others fall. As a rule, the newspapers, TV and other media don't tell us about the positive things people do – that doesn't sell papers. A steady diet of looking at other people's failings leads us to imitating the Pharisee's "I'm not like that that."

A more helpful approach comes from the nineteenth century Russian Saint, John of Kronstadt. He writes: "When the foolish thought of counting up any of your good works enters into your head, immediately correct your fault and rather count up your sins, your continual and innumerable offences against the All-Merciful and Righteous Master, and you will find that their number is as the sand of the sea, whilst your virtues in comparison with them are as nothing."

In the vision of the Gospel, repentance and humility are more important and higher than all of the other virtues, continuing until the end of our life. Today's kondakion sums up the Church's prayer for all of us: "Let us shun the boastful words of the Pharisee and learn from the Publican humility with sighing; let us cry out to our Savior: 'Have mercy on us, You who alone are merciful!'"

We Enter the Triodion

Today is the first Sunday in the Triodion, the ten weeks leading up to Pascha. The term also refers to the book which contains the hymns, readings and prayers proper to this season. Triodion literally means "three odes" and refers to the canons at daily Orthros which contain three rather than the usual nine odes. The Triodion as we have it today was organized by Studite monks in ninth-century Constantinople. They drew chiefly on texts from the Patriarchate of Jerusalem by a number of outstanding hymnographers, including Andrew of Crete, Cosmas of Maiuma and John of Damascus – some twenty composers in all. In general the prayers and services of the Triodion may be considered a great catechesis for the faithful, setting forth the entire scope of divine revelation through the reading of several books from the Old Testament and allusions to many others in the Great Canon and other hymns as well as patristic homilies and chants based on still other sacred texts. This catechesis is not about imparting information but about motivating us to embrace the great task of the season: repentance and the renewal of our life in Christ.



DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today HS-Houda Daou, Jackie Ventriglia. Requested by Antoinette Arraj & family (*Postponed*)
 +Richard (Tubby) Nejaimey (1yr.) Requested by the Family (*Postponed*)
 +Jeanette Halal. Requested by Antoinette Arraj & Family (*Postponed*)

Next Sunday

This morning's Coffee Hr. is hosted by the Richard Nejaimey Family
Next Sunday-The Ladies' Sodality Kibbeh Dinner will take the place of the Coffee Hr.

Please remember in your prayers: Mark Bashour, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Thomas Houde, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Jeannine McNeil, Linda Gartner, Billy Rahall, Houda Daou, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, Thomas Houde, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in Ukraine & the Middle East. Let us also pray for the repose of the souls of Zakeya Assaf, Genvieve Hatem, Hanna Francis, Saddalh Alkateb.

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.

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

If you would like me to bless your home, please email me at fr.bryan.mcneil@melkite.org or call the office (508) 752-4174.

KIBBEH DINNER

The newly re-established ladies' society, called the Ladies' Sodality of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, will have a Kibbeh Dinner on *Sunday February 16* after the Divine Liturgy. The cost is \$10 per person. Children under 12 are *free*. Please support the ladies as they begin a new chapter for the group. God bless them in their endeavors!

Last Week's Collection

Weekly \$ 1,068
 Candles \$ 39
 Coffee Hr. \$ 140
 Parking Rent \$ 2,000
 Memorial \$ 500
TOTAL \$ 3,747

Let us pray for increased generosity to our parish!

FINANCIALS

<u>1.2025</u>		<u>YTD (10.2024-1.2025)</u>	
Income	7,029	Income	39,324
Expense	15,199	Expenses	36,304
Net	(8,170)	Net	3,020



LOOK AT ME-I'M FASTING!

BEGINNING TODAY, the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Church calls on us to start preparing for the Great Fast. And how does it tell us to ready ourselves? – by telling us not to fast! Since the beginnings of the Church Christians have fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, remembering Judas' betrayal and Christ's passion. This coming week, however is one of the fast-free weeks of the Church year, when fasting is not prescribed. The other such weeks are part of a Great Feast – the Nativity, Pascha, and Pentecost. This is the only fast-free week not connected with a feast. What is the reason for not fasting this week?

The answer is found in the verse introducing the parable of the publican and the Pharisee read today: *"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable"* (Luke 18.9). Religious people who are *"confident of their own righteousness"* are complacent, self-satisfied with their level of observance. That level may be minimal – attending church on Sundays or even the greatest observances – or it may be more. The fault is the same whatever the level of observance: the complacent person feels no need to change his or her outlook; and so he allows no place for God to act within him. The complacent person thinks that he has complied with all of the requirements of religion. What more can be asked of him?

By setting aside the regular fasts this week the Church is telling the complacent person that what we do is not as important as the spirit in which we do them. Do you take pride in your fasting? Then don't fast lest it leave you like the Pharisee.

Challenging Our Religious Complacency

In addition, religious complacency invariably sets us against others. When we take pride in our level of religious observance our next thought is often "I come to church regularly, not like him.... They're not here for every lenten service ... She's half my age – why does she have to sit down when everyone else is standing?" and the like. We may not make these comments aloud but we don't have to. They have already sullied our heart. As St Cyril of Alexandria reminds us: "What profit is there in fasting twice in the week, if your so doing serves only as a pretext for ignorance and vanity, and make you supercilious and haughty, and selfish?" (*On the Gospel of Luke*, Sermon 120)

Religious complacency also sets us against God, as odd as that may seem. When we see our acts of religion as our passport to heaven we are telling God we have no need of Him. We are saving ourselves. Blessed Theophylact of Ochrid, in his *Explanation of the Gospel of St Luke*, says that there are many offshoots of self-love. "Presumption, arrogance, and vainglory all stem from this root. But the most destructive of all these kinds of self-love is pride, for pride is contempt of God. When a man ascribes his accomplishments to himself, and not to God, this is nothing less than denial of God and opposition to Him."

The error of the Pharisee is to confuse the means with the end. Acts of virtue or piety are meant to dispose our hearts towards communion with God, not turn us in on ourselves. As the late Metropolitan Anthony Bloom wrote, "From the [Pharisee] learn his works, but by no means his pride; for the work by itself means nothing and does not save." We may – and should – do good things as responses to God's love for us. We should not think that fasting, churchgoing or Bible reading automatically bring us to communion with God, merely because they are outwardly observed. Even when we practice religious observances from the best of motives, we can find them emptied of virtue through pride. In the words of St Gregory Palamas, "The unseen patron of evil ... can bring down the roof of good works after its construction, by means of pride and madness."

Prokimenon

Reader: Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them; Let all round about bring gifts to the awesome God.

People: Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them; Let all round about bring gifts to the awesome God.

Reader: God is renowned in Judah; is Israel, great is his name.

People: Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them; Let all round about bring gifts to the awesome God.

Reader: Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them;

People: Let all round about bring gifts to the awesome God.

Epistle: 2 Tm 3: 10-15 - Thirty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

Alleluia

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us sing joyfully to God our Savior!

Verse: Let us greet his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to Him.

Gospel: Lk 18:10-14 - Parable of the Pharisee & the Publican

Hirmos (3rd Tone)

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

As you have likely read on Facebook, Flocknote, or the website (www.olphworchester.org) we have cancelled Divine Liturgy for February 9. We are working to come up with a system to move Sunday Divine Liturgy around when a storm is forecast for Saturday night/Sunday morning. This might mean moving the Liturgy to 4PM on Saturday or having it later in the day on Sunday.

Please know that I don't take cancelling Liturgy lightly but I want people to be safe and given the forecast for this storm, it will more than likely still be snowing at our normal Liturgy time.

Please read the Sunday Epistle & Gospel and recite some of the prayers from the Liturgy or another service. I will be praying for all of you!

Fr. Bryan