

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

***Please note that attendance is currently limited by restrictions dictated by local response to the COVID-19 pandemic; if you are currently not assigned to an attendance group, please contact outreach@apostlethomas.org for information on when you may attend.**

February 28, 2021 | Sunday of the Prodigal Son

History of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son by John Sanidopoulos

Originally, the Parable of the Prodigal Son was the Gospel reading for the Second Sunday of Great Lent, and with the Prodigal Son was remembered the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, though this Gospel reading was not done until the following Sunday. This was because the period of Great Lent was mainly focused on being a period of catechism for catechumens, who were to be baptized on Lazarus Saturday or Holy Saturday, and the spirit of repentance was emphasized. It is still the case in the Roman Catholic Church for the Parable of the Prodigal Son to be read on this Sunday.

In the sixth century, however, the Publican and the Pharisee became identified with the First Sunday of the Triodion and the Prodigal Son was moved to the Second Sunday of the Triodion - which is the three-week period immediately preceding Great Lent - and the reading for the Second Sunday of Great Lent was replaced with the Healing of the Paralyzed Man in Capernaum from the Gospel of Mark.



This Gospel reading was the primary focus for the Second Sunday of Great Lent until 1368, when Saint Gregory Palamas became the primary focus, though it still remains the Gospel reading for this day.

Interestingly, some of the hymns from the Sunday of the Prodigal Son have remained in their original liturgical position on the Second Sunday of Great Lent, for example, the Second Canon for Sunday Matins, and also a number of the *idiomela* sung during the services of the week following the Second Sunday of Great Lent.

Synaxarion for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son

On this Sunday, we commemorate the Parable of the Prodigal Son, from the Holy Gospel, which our most Divine Fathers appointed to be read after the Parable of the Publican and Pharisee.

If you are prodigal, as I am, come with confidence. For the door of God's mercy has been opened.

Since there are some who are conscious of having lived prodigally from a very early age, giving themselves over to drunkenness and licentiousness and falling thereby into a depth of evils, and have reached despair, which is the offspring of vaunting; and since, for this reason, they have no desire to devote themselves to the pursuit of virtue, putting forward the swarm of their evils as an excuse, and since they are forever falling into the same evils and worse than these, the Holy Fathers, wishing, in their paternal loving-kindness towards such people, to lead them away from despair, placed this parable here after the first one, pulling out the passion of despair root and branch and arousing them to acquire virtue, and, through the story of the Prodigal Son, showing God's loving and exceedingly good mercies towards those who have sinned very greatly, proving from this parable of Christ's that there is no sin which can overcome His love for mankind.

The man, that is, the Theanthropic Word, had two sons, the righteous and the sinners. The older of the two always abode by the commandments of God and adhered to what was good, and did not become estranged from Him in any way; but the younger one, who craved sin and rejected fellowship with God through his shameful deeds, frittered away God's loving-kindness towards him and lived a prodigal way of life, since he did not preserve intact the image of God in himself, but followed after an evil demon, enslaved through pleasures to his evil volitions and unable to fulfill his own desire. For sin is something insatiable, habitually beguiling us through that which affords temporary pleasure; the parable likens this to the husks, the food of pigs, for husks initially taste sweet, but later feel rough and chaffy, which is always the case with sin. As soon as the Prodigal Son came to himself, perishing as he was from a deficit of virtue, he went to his Father, saying:

“Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son.” The Father received him in repentance, not chiding him, but embracing him, showing His Divine and paternal compassion; and He gave him a robe, that is, Holy Baptism, and a ring, that is, a seal and a pledge, the Grace of the All-Holy Spirit; in addition to this, He gave him shoes, so that his godly footsteps might no longer be wounded by serpents and scorpions, but rather, that he might be able to crush their heads. Thereafter, in His exceeding joy, the Father sacrificed the fatted calf for him, His Only-Begotten Son, granting him to partake of His Flesh and Blood. And yet, the elder son, marveling at His boundless compassion, said all that he said in the parable. But the loving Father calmly restrained him with kind and gentle words: “Son, you are ever with me, and it was meet for you to make merry with your Father, and be glad: for this my son was formerly dead in sin, and is alive again, after repenting of his wicked deeds; having been lost and become estranged from me by his life of pleasure, he was found again through me, for I felt compassion and called him back by my sympathetic disposition.” This parable can also be interpreted in terms of the Hebrew people and ourselves.

This is why this parable was placed here by the Holy Fathers: it uproots despair, as we have said, and faint-heartedness in performing good deeds, and exhorts one who has sinned as the Prodigal Son to repentance and remorse. This is our greatest weapon for warding off the darts of the Enemy, and a strong defense. By Your ineffable love for mankind, O Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today’s Epistle Lesson – Saint Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians 6:12-20

Brethren, all things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body *with her*? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

Today's Gospel Lesson - Saint Luke 15:11-32

The Lord said this parable, "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to *his* father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me*.' So he divided to them *his* livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and 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.' And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to *his* father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Once the younger son had gone away and taken his journey into a far country, "there he dispersed his substance with riotous living. And when", it says, "the younger son had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want." He did not think yet about returning profligate as he was, so "he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields

to feed swine' (Lk. 15.13-15). As soon as the son who had broken away from his father came to his senses and realized into what evils he had sunk, he wept over himself saying, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger?" (Lk. 15.17). Who are the hired servants? Those who through the sweat of repentance and humility gain salvation as their reward. Sons, by contrast, are those who obey God's commandments out of love. As the Lord said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (Jn. 14.23).

So the younger son, who has abandoned his sonship, comes out of his holy country of his own free will, and fallen into famine, passes judgment on himself, humbles himself and repents, saying, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven before thee" (Lk. 15.18). We were right when we said at the beginning that this father is God. How could this son who had left his father have sinned against heaven unless his father was in heaven? For he says, "I have sinned against heaven", meaning against the saints, the citizens of heaven, "and before thee", who dwellest in heaven with Thy saints, "and I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Lk. 15.19). Brought to his senses by humility he is right to say, "make me". Nobody can manage the steps of virtue on his own, though also not without his own deliberate choice. "And he arose", it says, "and came to his father. When he was still a great way off" (Lk. 15.20). How did he come to Him when he was still far away, so that his father, having compassion on him, came out to meet him? He who repents in his soul reaches God by his good purpose and his rejection of sin. He is, however, still far from God, tyrannized mentally by habitual sins and failings, and he needs great compassion and help from above if he is to be saved.

May we too, brethren, take hold of repentance by our actions. Let us abandon the evil one and his herds. Let us keep away from pigs and the husks they eat, that is to say, the disgusting passions and their devotees. Let us withdraw from evil pastures, namely, habitual sins. Let us flee from the land of the passions, which means unbelief, insatiate desire and intemperance, where there is a terrible famine of good things and where there are passions worse than any famine. Let us run to the immortal Father, the giver of life, as we follow, through the virtues, the path that leads to life. There we shall find that, in His love for mankind, He has come out to meet us, granting us forgiveness of sins, the token of immortality, the earnest of our inheritance to come. As we are taught by the Savior, as long as the prodigal son was in the land of passions, even though he thought and spoke words of repentance, he gained no benefit at all. Only when he left all his sinful deeds and ran to his father did he attain what was beyond hope. From then on he stayed near him in humility, living chastely and honestly and preserving unharmed the grace renewed in him by God.

May all of us attain this grace and keep it undiminished, that in the age to come we may rejoice with the prodigal son who was saved, in the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of the living, the Church of the firstborn, in Christ Himself our Lord, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

– St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 2 On the Publican and Pharisee*

Also Commemorated Today: Ven. Basil the Confessor

Saint Basil lived during the reign of Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (717-741). At a young age he became a monastic, and occupied himself with extreme asceticism. He bravely resisted the iconoclasts on behalf of the honor and veneration of holy icons. For this he was arrested and punished, proclaiming the truth of Orthodoxy. As a co-sufferer he had Saint Prokopios the Decapolite, who is celebrated on February 27th. After having his body and neck lacerated and flayed, he was cast into prison.

After the death of Emperor Leo, the Saint was freed from prison and again followed his former life of asceticism. He persuaded by his words and example many sinners and cacodox iconoclasts to return to Orthodoxy and to live a life of virtue. And through the abundant grace he received from Christ he was granted the power to work miracles and heal diseases. Having conducted himself in this manner, he departed to the Lord whom he loved from his youth with joy and thanksgiving. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

St. Eustathios, Archbishop of Antioch

Oswald, of Danish parentage, was brought up by his uncle Oda, Archbishop of Canterbury, and was also related to Oskytel, later Archbishop of York. He was also related to the cniht Osulf, who received land while Oswald was bishop of Worcester. Oswald was instructed by a Frankish scholar Frithegod. He held the office of dean of Winchester, but he was sent by his uncle to France and entered the monastery of Fleury about 950, where he was ordained in 959. While at Fleury he met Osgar of Abingdon and Germanus of Winchester. The influence of Fleury was to be evident later in Oswald's life, when it was one of the inspirations for the Regularis Concordia, the English code of monastic conduct agreed to in 970.

Oswald returned to England in 958 at the behest of his uncle, but Oda died before Oswald returned. Lacking a patron, Oswald turned to Oskytel, recently named Archbishop of York. It is possible that Oswald along with Oskytel travelled to Rome for Oskytel's pallium, but this story is only contained in a 12th-century Ramsey Abbey chronicle, so it may not be authentic. Even if he did not travel to Rome, Oswald was active in ecclesiastical affairs at York until Dunstan obtained Oswald's appointment to the see, or bishopric, of Worcester. He was consecrated as

Bishop of Worcester in 961. Soon after his consecration, he persuaded Germanus to come back to England and made him head of a small religious community near Westbury-on-Trym. After the establishment of this group about 962, Oswald grew worried that because the monastery was located on lands owned by the see of Worcester, his successors in the see might disrupt the community. He was offered the site of Ramsey Abbey in Huntingdonshire by Æthelwine, son of Æthelstan Half-King, and Oswald established a monastery there about 971 that attracted most of the members of the community at Westbury. This foundation at Ramsey went on to become Ramsey Abbey. Ramsey was Oswald's most famous foundation, with its church dedicated in 974. Later, Oswald invited Abbo of Fleury to come and teach at Ramsey. Oswald directed the affairs of Ramsey Abbey until his death, when the dean Eadnoth became the first abbot. He gave a magnificent Bible to Ramsey, which was important enough to merit a mention in Oswald's Life. Alongside the gift of the book, Oswald also contributed wall hangings and other textiles to the abbey.

Oswald supported Dunstan and Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester, in their efforts to purify the Church from secularism. Aided by King Edgar, he took a prominent part in the revival of monastic discipline along the precepts of the Rule of Saint Benedict. His methods differed from Æthelwold's, who often violently ejected secular clergy from churches and replaced them with monks. Oswald also organized the estates of his see into administrative hundreds known as the Oswaldslow, which helped stabilize the ecclesiastical revenues. He constantly visited the monasteries he founded, and was long remembered as father of his people both as bishop and archbishop. It was Oswald who changed the cathedral chapter of Worcester from priests to monks, although the exact method that he employed is unclear. One tradition says that Oswald used a slow approach in building up a new church of monks next to the cathedral, allowing the cathedral's priests to continue performing services in the cathedral until the monastic foundation was strong enough to take over the cathedral. Another tradition claims that, instead, Oswald expelled any of the clergy in the cathedral that would not give up their wives and replaced them with monks immediately. Oswald also reformed Winchcombe Abbey, along with the monasteries of Westbury Priory, Pershore Abbey, and Evesham Abbey. It is also possible that monasteries were established in Gloucester and Deerhurst, but evidence is lacking for their exact foundation dates.

In 972 Oswald was made Archbishop of York and journeyed to Rome to receive a pallium from Pope John XIII. It is possible that he also traveled on Edgar's behalf to the court of the Emperor Otto I, and that these two journeys had been combined. He continued to hold the see of Worcester in addition to York. The holding of

Worcester in addition to York became traditional for almost the next fifty years. Although it was uncanonical, it had many advantages for York in that it added a much richer diocese to their holdings, and one which was more peaceful as well. When Edgar died in 975, Ælfhere, Ealdorman of Mercia, broke up many monastic communities, some of which were Oswald's foundations. Ramsey, however, was not disturbed, probably due to the patronage of Æthelwine, Ealdorman of East Anglia, son of Æthelstan Half-King. Ælfhere was a supporter of Ethelred the Unready, the son of Edgar's third marriage, while Oswald supported the son of Edgar's first marriage, Edward the Martyr, in the dispute over who would succeed King Edgar.

In 985, Oswald invited Abbo of Fleury to come to Ramsey to help found the monastic school there. Abbo was at Ramsey from 985 to 987, where he taught computus, or the methods for calculating Easter. It was also often used in trying to calculate the date of the Last Judgment. A surviving manuscript gives a list compiled by Oswald, setting forth estates that had been taken from the diocese of York.

To nourish his own humility and charity, Oswald always invited twelve of the poor to dine with him each day during Lent (some say every day). These he served himself, and also washed and kissed their feet. Oswald died on 29 February 992 in the act of washing the feet of the poor at Worcester, as was his daily custom during Lent, and was buried in the Church of Saint Mary at Worcester. He promoted the education of the clergy and persuaded scholars to come from Fleury and teach in England. A Life of Oswald was written after his death, probably by Byrhtferth, a monk of Ramsey Abbey. Two manuscripts, a psalter (Harley MS 2904 in the British Library) and a pontifical (MS 100, part 2 from Sidney Sussex College of Cambridge University), probably belonged to Oswald and would have been used in his daily devotions.

Almost immediately after his death miracles were reported at his funeral and at his tomb. His remains were translated to a different burial spot in the cathedral ten years after his death. His feast day is celebrated on 29 February. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*



March Anniversaries and Birthdays

Anniversaries:

None

Birthdays:

Ciaran Richardson 1st
Nicole Nicolaus 16th
Adam Roberts 25th

Kristen McNeil 10th
Alexander Wright 19th
Tyler Vallandingham 25th

Heather Wright 16th
Nancy Hall 21st
Jared Karbowsky 26th



DIOCESAN LENTEN RETREAT

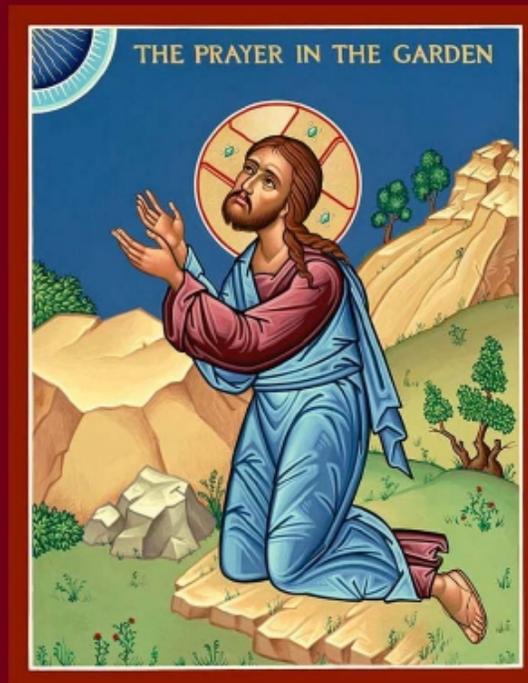
Saturday April 3, 2021

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

NEPESIS-WATCHFULNESS: BEING ATTENTIVE IN A DISTRACTED AGE

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbyteria Katie Baker & family, Santiago Alzugaray, Patty Blaydoe, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Luke & Marlana Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Howl family, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl & family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, Luke & Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Nicholas Pavlik, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore & Christina Ristas, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Joe & Darlene Waters, Christine, Jo, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectarios & Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)