

When Abba Macarius was returning from the marsh to his cell one day carrying some palm-leaves, he met the devil on the road with a scythe. The latter struck at him as much as he pleased, but in vain, and he said to him, “What is your power, Macarius, that makes me powerless against you? All that you do, I do, too; you fast, so do I; you keep vigil, and I do not sleep at all; in one thing only do you beat me.” Abba Macarius asked what that was. He said, “Your humility. Because of that I can do nothing against you.”

From the Sayings of the
Desert Fathers

**Sunday 9 February 2014 is the
Sunday of the Publican and the
Pharisee**

Matins Gospel: John 21:14-25

Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15

Gospel: Luke 18:10-14

Apolytikion:

Let us flee the proud speech of the Pharisee; and let us learn the humility of the Publican, as with groans we cry to the Saviour: ‘Be merciful to us, for you alone are ready to forgive!’

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: 2 Timothy 2:1-10; John 15:17-27; 16:1-2
Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro; Mariam Isapostola

Tuesday: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6; Matthew 10:1, 5-8
Leo the Great; Agapetus the Confessor

Wednesday: 2 Peter 3:1-18; Mark 13:24-31
Philemon & Archippus, of the 70; Philothei of Athens

Thursday: 1 John's 1:8-10; 2:1-6; Mark 13:31-37; 14:1-2
Leo, Bp. Of Catania; Agathus of Rome

Friday: 1 John's 2:7-17; Mark 14:3-9
Timothy the Righteous; John, Pat. Of Constantinople

Saturday: 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 20:46-47; 21:1-4
Saturday of Souls; Uncovering of Relics at Eugenius; Righteous Thalassius and Baradatus



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

9 February 2014

**Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa**

True Humility

In today’s Gospel for the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Church begins to prepare us for the coming Lenten Fast. In today’s parable, we see two very different responses to God. The Pharisee considered himself a righteous man. He thanks God for this and points out that he is not like other sinners, and especially not like the Publican (or tax-collector) in whose presence he was praying. The Publican, by contrast, did not even dare to lift his eyes to heaven, but could only repeat: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Jesus says of him: “This man, I tell you, went home justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up.”

This parable presents us with a warning. We do need to pray and to fast, to keep the commandments and to give alms. These are all good things. But with them comes the danger of pride, for it is very easy to use the good that we do to prop up our own egos and make us feel superior to others. Such pride really blinds us to our own reality and to all that we need to repent of. It is not for nothing that the early Fathers regarded pride as the most dangerous of the vices, for it prevents us from doing the one thing necessary, which is turning to God in sincere repentance.

But this parable also presents us with an example of true repentance in the person of the Publican who knew his need for God and could only say: “God be merciful to me a sinner!” He did not compare himself to anyone else, but was only conscious of his own situation before God, knowing his great need of God. Growth in humility can, for many of us, be one of the most difficult things that there is to learn, for we so easily compare ourselves to others or seek to justify what we do. Yet growth in humility lies at the very heart of our Christian life, for only in knowing and accepting who we truly are before God can we turn to Him in genuine repentance. And the point of our Lenten prayer and fasting is precisely to help us to open ourselves to God in this way.



Let us not pray as the Pharisee: for he who exalts himself shall be humbled. Let us humble ourselves before God and with fasting cry aloud as the Publican: God be merciful to us sinners.

From Vespers for the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

Whenever we profess the Creed we say:

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

Baptism

Baptism lies at the very origin of our Christian faith. We enter the Church through baptism and it is only through baptism that we are enabled to recite the Creed and to participate in the Holy Eucharist. Indeed, as we saw previously, in the early centuries of the Church's life those who were not baptised, or who were still preparing for baptism, were not allowed to be present for the entire Liturgy. Catechumens, as those preparing for baptism were called, were usually baptised during the Easter Liturgy, providing a vivid reminder of the link between baptism and the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.



We enter the Church by baptism, and this means that we enter it by entering personally into Christ's Death and Resurrection, for baptism means death and rebirth in Christ. We die to sin and are reborn into new life in Jesus Christ. In the baptismal service, we renounce "Satan, and all his worship and all his works" and we join ourselves to Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul tells us that in baptism we are united with Jesus Christ in His Death and Resurrection and are given the power to live a new life. He writes:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. (Romans 6:3-5)

Baptism is the foundation of our Christian life and it is only by entering the Church through baptism that we are able to participate in the other Mysteries of the Church. Saint John Chrysostom compares baptism to childbirth and the baptismal font to the womb. As soon as a baby is born, it needs to be fed at its mother's breast, and, in the same way, as soon as someone is born anew in the baptismal font, they need to be spiritually fed with the Body and Blood of Christ and nurtured in the Christian life.

Our baptism finds its fulfilment in the reception of Holy Communion and we continually renew our baptism in the reception of Holy Communion in the Divine Liturgy where our true identity is revealed.



What is the nature or the function of baptism? The changing of the person baptised in thought and word and action and his transformation according to the power bestowed on him into that of which he has been born.

Saint Basil the Great

The Lenten Triodion Begins

In just under a month's time the season of Great Lent begins, possibly the richest and most distinctive period of the Church's life. During Lent we are called in a particular way to repentance, to an intense time of prayer and fasting, to a simplification of life and an inner renewal, so that we can prepare ourselves to celebrate the great events of Christ's Death and Resurrection.

Great Lent begins on Bright Monday which this year is on 3 March and which is seven weeks before Pascha. However, lest Lent should suddenly appear unannounced, the Church also gives a time of preparation for Lent itself. This period of the Triodion takes its name from the liturgical texts which we begin using today, and which we shall continue using until the end of Holy Week.

These texts are rich in meaning and teach us the true meaning of the Lenten fast. The Sundays, in particular, have themes that serve to focus our attention on the coming fast, to warn us of the dangers associated with it, and to help us discover in ever-greater depth what it really all about.

This time of preparation for Great Lent consists of the following:

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee (today)

The week following this Sunday is a fast-free week in which the Wednesday and Friday fasts are suspended. The reason for this is to remind us of the danger of becoming proud about our fasting as the Pharisee did.

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son (16 February)

The Sunday of the Last Judgement (23 February)

This is also known as **Meatfare Sunday**, because it is the last day on which meat is eaten until Pascha.

Cheesefare week, in which we fast from meat only all week.

Forgiveness Sunday (2 March)

This is also called the "**Expulsion of Adam from Paradise**" which is the theme of the liturgical texts, reminding us that we too have been exiled from Paradise and that our journey through Lent is a journey back to God.

This Sunday is also called **Cheesefare Sunday** because it is the last day on which cheese (or dairy products) are eaten until Pascha.

The theme of forgiveness is found not only in the Gospel for the day, but also in the **Forgiveness Vespers** on Sunday afternoon, which is the liturgical start of Lent, and in which all present ask the forgiveness of everyone else, for we are reminded that we cannot expect to receive God's forgiveness if we are not prepared to forgive others.