

ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary Parish • Santa Rosa, CA. 95407

Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

—from *Great Lent* by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

The Gospel lesson (Luke 18:10–14) pictures a man who is always pleased with himself and who thinks that he complies with all the requirements of religion. He is self-assured and proud of himself. In reality, however, he has falsified the meaning of religion. He has reduced it to external observations and he measures his piety by the amount of money he contributes to the temple. As for the Publican, he humbles himself and his humility justifies him before God. 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, of self-glorification, and of 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. Even our churches—are they not imbued with that same spirit of the Pharisee? Do we not want our every contribution, every “good deed,” all that we do “for the Church” to be acknowledged, praised, publicized?

But what is humility? The answer to this question may seem a paradoxical one who knows God, who contemplates Him in His creation and in His saving acts, it is evident that humility is truly a divine quality, the very content and the radiance of that glory which, as we sing during the Divine Liturgy, fills heaven and earth. In our human mentality we tend to oppose “glory” and “humility”—the latter being for us the indication of a flaw or deficiency. For us it is our ignorance or incompetence that makes or ought to make us feel humble. It is almost impossible to “put across” to the modern man, fed on publicity, self-affirmation, and endless self-praise, that all that which is genuinely perfect, beautiful, and good is at the same time naturally humble; for precisely because of its perfection, it does not need “publicity,” external glory, or “showing off” of any kind. God is humble because He is perfect; His humility is His glory and the source of all true beauty, perfection, and goodness, and everyone who

approaches God and knows Him immediately partakes of the Divine humility and is beautified by it. This is true of Mary, the Mother of Christ, whose humility made her the joy of all creation and the greatest revelation of beauty on earth, true of all the saints, and true of every human being during the rare moments of his contacts with God. How does one become humble? The answer, for a Christian, is simple: by contemplating Christ, the divine humility incarnate, the One in whom God has revealed once and for all His glory as humility and His humility as glory. “Today,” Christ said on the night of His ultimate self-humiliation, “the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in Him.” Humility is learned by contemplating Christ who said: “Learn from Me for I am meek and humble in heart.” Finally, it is learned by measuring everything by Him, by referring everything to Him. For without Christ, true humility is impossible, while with the Pharisee, even religion becomes pride in human achievements, another form of Pharisaic self-glorification.

The lenten season begins then by a quest, a prayer for humility which is the beginning of true repentance. For repentance, above everything else, is a return to the genuine order of things, the restoration of the right vision. It is, therefore, rooted in humility, and humility—the divine and beautiful humility—is its fruit and end. “Let us avoid the high flown speech of the Pharisee,” says the *Kontakion* of this day, “and learn the majesty of the Publican’s humble words...” We are at the gates of repentance and at the most solemn moment of the Sunday vigil; after the Resurrection and the appearance of Christ have been announced — “having beheld the Resurrection of Christ...” — we sing for the first time the *troparia* which will accompany us through the entire Lent:

*Open to me the gates of repentance, O giver of Life,
for my spirit rises early to pray towards Thy holy temple,
bearing the temple of my body all defiled;
But in Thy compassion, purify me by the loving kindness of
Thy mercy.*

INFORMATION

Protection of the Holy Virgin & St. Seraphim of Sarov Church
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Our Parish Secretary may be reached at the Church office
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Fr. Lawrence Margitich may be reached at the Parish office
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PARISH CONTACTS

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SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS

First, let us lay down basic **Principles** of understanding:

- 1) St. Hilary of Portier reminds us that “Scripture is not in the reading but in the understanding.” We understand by prayerful study.
- 2) There is a progressive revelation of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Look for Christ in all of the Old Testament.
- 3) Everything that is said about God in Scripture must be understood befittingly of God (St. John Chrysostom).
- 4) God is a God of Love, yesterday, today and forever, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, despite the apparent differences.
- 5) The Bible is a sacred collection of writings, a library of texts that Holy Tradition has collected through the Holy Spirit, revealing the nature and purposes of God as far as can be known by man, and revealing the path and way of our salvation in Christ. Orthodox do not “worship” Scripture or follow a protestant form of *bibliolatry*. It is not as a Koran, believed to have come down whole and entire from heaven.

Question: Why is the Book of Numbers so repetitive?

Answer: Some chapters of this book, as well as other books of the Old Testament are records of “government” documents, royal lists of which tribe is to occupy which part of the land; how a sacrifice is to be performed, what kind of punishment might be appropriate; how justice, fairness and God’s Law are to be kept. The repetitious character is in keeping with legal documents (even our contracts have such repetition). Each instance has to be complete in the telling. Secondly, this is also oral history, and it relies on repetition for memorization, just as songs do. When the readings are done out loud, and one imagines a large number of listeners gathered round, all intent on hearing what their tribe (Judah, Benjamin, etc.) has

done, will receive, is expected to do, it’s easy to understand why there is repetition. One might also notice that the Book of Deuteronomy repeats a great deal of what came before it. These documents carry forward earlier commandments and teachings, in order to reaffirm their centrality and importance for the people. Third, the repetition is how later generations make the keeping of God’s commandments their own.

Question: Why is God so angry and destructive? Is this the same God as Jesus; is this the same God as Allah (from Islam)?

Answer: The questions require an answer that simply won’t fit in these pages. It will be dealt with in a talk or comments in church. As we only approach this question, remember the *Principles* given above. Is God’s anger the same as ours? We say that God has hands, that He has a heart, or His “right arm” of strength. We don’t mean that He has physical features like us; it’s not literal. In the same way, we say that God has anger, wrath, and other ways of relating, but we certainly don’t mean that He is subject to emotions and passions like us. Read Exodus 34:6-7 in the light of *Principles #3 and 4*:

“And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’”

This proclamation, or versions of it, appear nine times in the Old Testament, revealing to us God’s fundamental presentation of Himself in those pages. As we read the Old Testament we must realize that God worked with humans in

the condition they were at, in order to prepare them for His revelation and incarnation. We may not impose our sense of morality and justice upon God or upon the ancient peoples, as if they lived by the rule of law and democracy. Genesis tells us that from Cain and Abel on, there was injustice, darkness, murder, abuse, mayhem, adultery, human sacrifice, fertility-sex cults, debauchery, and selfishness. It was (and is still) a world in which the mighty, evil and terror prevail. The Old Testament records for us that God could only deal with destructive and evil humans by showing Himself to be more powerful. For those who are truly interested, I recommend you listen to Father Thomas Hopko's podcast on this topic at the following website:

http://ancientfaith.com/podcasts/hopko/war_and_violence_in_the_ot.

God's ways are not our ways, and His plan, His acts of meeting violence with violence, are indeed strange and incomprehensible—our ways do not “befit God,” to remind you of #3 above.

Fr. Thomas tells us that what's going on is that the Lord is battling the idols, the false gods, showing His Lordship to all, over all things, in a manner that the people of the time would understand. We are not to judge Him with our limited understanding, as if He has human emotions. God is the Lord of history, guiding, shaping, and working with fallen and spiritually sick human beings. He created this world knowing that the path to the establishment of salvation in the Kingdom of God, would be one that traversed the path of the mystery of human free will, sin and evil, *and would culminate in the suffering in the flesh of the Word of God Himself*. When the Word of the Father, Jesus, was born of the Virgin, then God began something utterly new for us. No longer would He battle the false gods of the idols by sending violence. That interaction with man changed in God's loving plan to redeem not just His own Israel, but all peoples—the Egyptians who enslaved them, the peoples who were destroyed in order for them to possess the promised land, those who practiced human sacrifice, worshipped idols, broke the God-given Law of Moses and were punished. He wants to redeem and save His entire creation, and all peoples. In Jesus Christ—Whom we confess to be both God and Man, the Son of the Father, and the most perfect expression and exact image of the the Father—God Himself would submit to all the injustice, slander, evil and sin of mankind, and would give Himself over to the strange verdict of death on the Cross in order to complete what He began in the Old Testament. *“By Thy precious blood, Thou hast redeemed*

us from the curse of the Law” (hymn from Holy Friday)

One cannot dismiss the Old Testament because one doesn't understand it, as did some heretical Christians in the 2nd century. Jesus Himself referred to the Old Testament many times; He claimed as His own all the Prophets, the Law and the Psalms. Recall what our Lord said after the Resurrection to Luke and Cleopas: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning with Moses [meaning, the first five books of the Old Testament] and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

One has to *deal with the Old Testament as it is* and not dismiss what we don't understand. We remember the principles, especially to see that all of it is about Jesus, His coming, and His death and resurrection. In His Coming God did something entirely new between Himself and mankind—in the person and “yes” of the Virgin Mary—and mankind was now ready for New Covenant.

Finally, to answer the last question: No, the Holy Trinity, and Jesus as the Son of the Father, is entirely, completely and utterly incompatible with the Moslem Allah. Islam sees Jesus as a prophet, but not as God's Son Who was crucified. Islam denies that Jesus is equal in honor, glory, eternal life with the Father and the Spirit, since they do not accept that God is Trinity. Islam is about God giving a new law (replaces the Judaic Law). He is not approachable or to be known; one may not enter into communion with Him. In short, God either is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or else, as Islam teaches, He is not. One cannot reconcile the two. Islam, coming some six hundred years after our Lord's resurrection, is called by St. John of Damascus a heresy, in that it distorted the image of God.

Our Christian Faith, from the Lord, the Apostles and all the Saints, the Fathers and the entire life of the Church, teaches us that “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth” (John 1:12–14). Jesus gives us abundant and divine life, not a book of law. And this divine life is communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; by this we not only become children by grace, and know God, but even more, we become, by grace, like Him.

—Fr. Lawrence, with thanks to Reader Vincent Rossi for his help

GREAT LENT—AN OVERVIEW

The word “Lent” refers to the “lengthening of days” with the coming of spring—so rather than a time of gloom and sorrow, Lent is a springtime, a time of potential spiritual rebirth, a time to see Christ more deeply. The story about Zacchaeus in Luke 19 reminds us that our desire to see and know Jesus Christ may bring us unexpected joy. Lent originated in the ancient Church not for monastics, but historically we learn that it was (and is) a time for the Catechumens to prepare for baptism at Pascha. As they strive to learn to pray and purify their hearts, minds and bodies; as they learn about the Lord and His Kingdom; as they fast and abstain, do works of mercy; as they seek the silent place of the heart, and enter more deeply into the Vespers, Matins, Liturgies, we who are already living the life of the Kingdom of God are doing the same.

Our own efforts to do all of these things is not to fulfill an external rule, but to reignite the Baptismal grace that the Lord gave us, and in doing this, we support the Catechumens, who see that the life of prayer, fasting, works of mercy and worship is real, and transforms us,

opening us up to God’s grace, preparing us to enter into the Lord’s Pascha, His death and glorious resurrection.

Practically speaking, Lent is a tithe of our year. It belongs to the Lord, and He gives it back to us as full of grace and possibilities. During Lent we abstain from all meat products, all eggs, cheese, dairy products. On some days we try to not eat at all; on others, very little. On Wednesdays we prepare to receive the Presanctified Body and Blood of the Lord by fasting strictly from Noon on, and in the evening we come to receive Communion at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

During Lent we read more scripture (shutting off the TV allows some time for reading—new studies are finding, once again, how harmful TV can be to our soul, not to mention avoiding assaults on Christianity that appeared last week on Saturday Night Live!); we pray more at home, we talk of spiritual things, and find ways to do works of mercy for others. Is that all? No, we are just scratching the surface, and have yet to speak of the blessings! —*Fr. Lawrence*

Confronting Intrusive Thoughts

Elder Thaddaeus

The Enemy says: “It’s impossible.” Our Lord says: “All things are possible.” (Luke 18:27)

The Enemy says: “You’re too tired.” Our Lord says: “I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28–30)

The Enemy says: “Nobody really loves you.” Our Lord says: “I love you.” (John 3:16 and 13:34)

The Enemy says: “You can’t go on. You’re at the end of your rope.” Our Lord says: “My grace is sufficient.” (2 Cor. 12:9; Ps. 91:15)

The Enemy says: “It doesn’t make sense. There’s nothing but darkness ahead.” Our Lord says: “I will direct your steps.” (Proverbs 3:5–6)

The Enemy says: “You can’t do it.” Our Lord says: “You can do all things in me.” (Phil. 4:13)

The Enemy says: “It’s not worth it.” Our Lord says: “It will be worth it.” (Rom. 8:28)

The Enemy says: “There’s no hope for you. Your sins are too many.” Our Lord says: “I forgive you.” (1 John 1:9; Rom. 8:1)

The Enemy says: “You can’t manage.” Our Lord says: “I will supply all your needs.” (Phil. 4:19)

The Enemy says: “You should be afraid.” Our Lord says: “I have not given you a spirit of fear.” (2 Tim. 1:7)

The Enemy says: “You’re too worried and frustrated. You’ll fail.” Our Lord says: “Cast all your cares on Me.” (1 Peter 5:7)

The Enemy says: “You don’t have enough faith.” Our Lord says: “I have given everyone a measure of faith.” (Rom. 12:3)

The Enemy says: “You’re stupid.” Our Lord says: “I give you wisdom.” (1 Cor. 1:30)

The Enemy says: “You’re all alone. Everyone has forsaken you.” Our Lord says: “I will never leave you or forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5)

— from the book, *Confronting and Controlling Thoughts*
words of Elder Thaddaeus

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- OUR PARISH OFFERS its since thanks to Pedy's Petals Flower and Event Design, at 101 Montgomery Drive. With a reference by Kathie Dadjou, a friend of George Barsi, the owner, Pedy Lawson, was kind enough to send us over \$1000 worth of flowers as a gift. I encourage all of you to call Pedy to thank her, and to frequent her store when purchasing flowers. Pedy's phone is 595-4458.
- A TALK AND SLIDE SHOW will be presented by Mother Nina from Alaska, on **Orthodoxy in Alaska**, Thursday evening, February 28, 6:30 PM.
- THE FEAST OF THE 40 Martyrs of Sebaste will be transferred from March 9, to March 23.
- MARCH 25, Feast of the Annunciation: Vigil at 4 PM, on Sunday, March 24 (yes, it is the first Sunday of Lent, and the end of a long week); Vesperal Liturgy at 5 PM, Monday, March 25. If you are coming from work and must arrive a bit late, prepare for Holy Communion as best you can and receive.

PRE-PLANNING FOR HOLY WEEK — SET ASIDE TIME NOW FOR THE LORD

- April 27, Lazarus Saturday
 - Divine Liturgy at 9 AM
 - Vigil for Palm Sunday at 5 PM
- April 28, Palm Sunday
 - Festal Divine Liturgy & Procession at 10 AM
- April 29–May 1, Holy Monday-Holy Wednesday
 - Matins at 6:30 AM; Presanctified at 6:15 PM
- May 2, Holy Thursday
 - Vesperal Liturgy at 11:30 AM
 - Matins with the Passion Gospels at 7 PM
- May 3, Holy Friday
 - Royal Hours at 9 AM
 - Vespers with the Shroud at 3 PM
 - Matins with the Lamentations at 7 PM
- May 4, Holy Saturday
 - Vesperal Liturgy at 1 PM
 - Midnight Office at 11:30 PM
 - Paschal Matins and Liturgy
- May 5, Pascha
 - Vespers at 1 PM followed by the Paschal BBQ

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR
TRADITIONAL

Blini Brunch

Complete with sour cream, lox, herring, and
caviar...

(Not to mention butter, syrup and bacon)

Sunday, March 10, 2013 • 12 NOON

We will be honoring this tradition with our family and friends, so be sure to invite them. Please come enjoy Blini with us as we prepare to enter that wonderful time of Lent.

The Sisterhood of the Protection of the Holy Virgin Parish

BARN DANCE

FRIDAY MARCH 1, 2013 * 7:00-10:00 P.M.



Live Music and Dance Caller

An evening of fun for the entire family!

Adults/ \$5 + a finger food to share
12 & under/ free

Reserve your tickets by 2/25
morozlisa@gmail.com

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

MARCH 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
February 24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:45 PM, Bell Ringers Mtg 	25 Fast Free Week	26	27 Fr. Lawrence in Portland at Mission Retreat Tuesday–Thursday	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM Akathist • 6:30 PM, Talk and Slide show on Orthodoxy in Alaska 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, COUNTRY DANCE 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Baptism • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, VIGIL
3 – Prodigal Son <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	4	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Study Group in Rohnert Park 	6 <i>[Fr. Lawrence in SF all day at Diocesan Council Meeting]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Holy Unction for Kathie Franotovich 	8	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, VIGIL
10 – Last Judgment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	11 Meat Fast begins	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Study Group in Rohnert Park 	13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noon, Senior Lunch (Potluck, meatless) • 6 PM, Vespers 	15	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Baptism of Sophia Ramirez • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, VIGIL
17 – Forgiveness Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 1:15 PM, Vespers of Forgiveness 	18 – Clean Week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, 6th Hour • 7 PM, Canon of St. Andrew 	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, 6th Hour • 7 PM, Canon of St. Andrew 	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Canon of St. Andrew • Noon, 6th Hour • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified, Meal to follow 	21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, 6th Hour • 7 PM, Canon of St. Andrew 	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Liturgy of the Presanctified & Canon to Saint Theodore 	23 - 40 Martyrs of Sebaste <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, VIGIL
24 – Sunday of Orthodoxy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy/Procession • Noon, Agape Meal • 4 PM, Vigil for the feast of Annunciation 	25 – Annunciation <i>Strict Fast Day, from 11 AM</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vesperal Liturgy 	26 – Leave-taking	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified, Meal to follow 	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 6 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Parish Council 	29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 6 PM, Akathist to the Theotokos 	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, VIGIL
31 – St. Gregory Palamas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • Project Mexico Presentation 	April 1	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified, Meal to follow 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Liturgy of the Presanctified 	6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, VIGIL