

I will arise and go to my father. —*Luke 15:18.* Action! The prodigal does not just sit and lament over his mistakes. Neither does he expect anyone to come and rescue him. His extreme need has brought him to his senses. The Scriptures say that “he came to himself.” In a moment of self-honesty he takes responsibility for himself. He blames no-one, makes no excuses. He got himself into this pickle and he sees clearly what he must do to get himself out of it. So he “rises up” and exerts himself. He acts. Christianity is all about *accepting* responsibility for our decisions, not about avoiding it. This acceptance of our responsibility is foundational to genuine Christian life precisely because our freedom, and thus our responsibility, are God’s gifts to humanity. God seems to have no intention of taking them back. Getting God’s forgiveness is not our problem. That has been promised and God always delivers. In my experience, both personally and as a pastor, our problem is whether we are really willing to change; willing enough to rise up and exert ourselves. This is our responsibility. *God, grant me the willingness and the courage to do “the next hard thing,” to take the next step on my journey to Your kingdom—today.* —Fr. Philip McCaffrey

Ten or so parishioners met on Wednesday evening to discuss the viability of having a Glendi (Greek for party) after Pentecost. All seemed to agree that this would NOT be a “food festival” but rather an evening party, for our parish and friends, with live music, dancing, appetizers, wine, etc. A max of 200 tickets would be sold. Areas of responsibility were identified—although none were claimed. Before moving forward we would need a main coordinator. More info to follow. —*Fr Lawrence*



ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



February 16, 2025

Sunday of the Parable of the Prodigal Son



- TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone One:
When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ; glory to Thy kingdom; glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.
- KONTAKION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone One:
As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Thyself. Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. Adam exults, O Master, Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to Thee: Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ.
- KONTAKION OF THE PRODIGAL SON, Tone Three:
Foolishly I sprang away from Thy great fatherly glory and dispersed in wicked deeds the riches that Thou didst give me. With the Prodigal I therefore cry unto Thee now: I have sinned against Thee, O compassionate Father. But receive me in repentance; and make me as one of Thy hired servants, O Lord.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Feb. 15: 3:30 PM, Class for Catechumens and Inquirers on *Holy Baptism*
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, Feb. 16: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
11:30 AM, Church School
Noon, Agape Meal
- Wed., Feb. 19: 5:30 PM, Akathist to Matushka Olga
6 PM, Vespers
6:30 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Thurs., Feb. 20: 7 PM, Bible Study online with Fr James
- Friday, Feb. 21: 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confessions
- Saturday, Feb. 22: 3:30 PM, Class for Catechumens and Inquirers on *On Chrismation*
4:30 PM, Panikhida for Memorial Saturday
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions

All are welcome to participate in the class for catechumens and inquirers in the Parish Hall at 3:30 PM on Saturday. Topics for the next eight Saturdays will be: Baptism, Chrismation, the Eucharist, Confession, Priesthood, Marriage, concluding with a class on Death and the Funeral. Catechumens also receive brief instruction during the Sunday Divine Liturgy when they “depart” to the Protection Church, after the sermon.

On the three Sundays prior to Great Lent (starting this weekend) we sing *Psalm 136* while the clergy are communing (properly speaking, this hymn belongs to Matins). This Psalm begins with the phrase: “By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.” A soloist intones the verses of this ancient lament, and the people led by the choir respond by singing “Alleluia.” This was a psalm sung by the Jewish people who had been taken as captives to Babylon (in 597 BC the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed), with no hope of returning home. It was a time of bitter repentance and sorrow. In the Scriptures the city of Babylon is seen as the antithesis of Jerusalem, as the broken and rebellious world opposed to God’s Kingdom, the condition of sin, of confusion, of idolatry, of [sexual immor-](#)

[tality](#), of exile from God. The tower of Babel in Babylon was built on the presumption of those who felt they could control God, get Him to do their bidding. Babylon can be identified with the pig pen in the [Parable of the Prodigal Son](#), the “far country” i.e., an animal existence, rather than one as the child of God, the land of sin and exile from God. The Prodigal son was weeping in the pigpen only when he remembered the house of the Father. We realize that life as it is now is not normal. Paradise is normal. The psalm guides our understanding and our repentance. let us yearn for repentance and paradise. We come to the last, outrageous and violent verse of the psalm, and wonder, what could it mean? *Happy shall he be, that shall take and dash thine infants against the rock. Alleluia.* In our spiritual warfare, we are constantly confronted by intrusive thoughts—[logismi](#)—and passions that would lead us into sin. When they are just thoughts—infants, so to say, small and as yet harmless—we call upon the Name of Christ, who is the [Rock](#) (according to many scriptural verses), and the sins are crushed by Christ. —*Fr Lawrence*

Forgiveness Sunday Vespers—March 2 at 1 PM—ushers us into Great Lent. Vespers begins as usual, with the reading of Psalm 103, the Great Litany, and the various hymns of the day. After “O Joyous Light” we will sing the Lenten hymn “Turn not Thy countenance from Thy servant, for I am afflicted, hearken to me speedily, attend to my soul, and deliver it.” From that point on we are in Great Lent, and the choir will be singing the Lenten melodies for the litanies during weekdays. At the end of this unique Service we will ask forgiveness of each other, each person approaching the priests, then each other. Those who can, do a prostration before one another; those who cannot, simply ask forgiveness. We say: “forgive me;” and answer back, “forgive me. God forgives.” The important thing is to ask for forgiveness and then give it. In a Parish—and the longer you are in it the more this is true—there are things to forgive which we might not even know about. Please understand that I am urging you, in the strongest, most emphatic and pastoral way I can, to attend this Vespers and participate in it, since Lent cannot really begin without it. Here is a [brief reflection](#) on this day by Fr Alexander Schmemmann. —*Fr. Lawrence*

During Great Lent Matins will be celebrated most mornings (refer to the Calendar). Our Lenten Matins is abbreviated, and is about 1.25 hr long. Come and go as you need.