

Holy Assumption Orthodox Church
Celebrating 125 years witnessing to the Apostolic Faith

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Rev. Fr. Peter Tomas, Rector

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***Holy Assumption Orthodox Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America,
Diocese of the Midwest***

FEBRUARY 25, 2024

**THIRTY EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE**

EPISTLE: 2 Timothy 3:10-15

Timothy, my son: You have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra – what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

GOSPEL: Luke 18:10-14

The Lord spoke this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven,



The Publican and the Pharisee

and beat his breast. For he feared God, and was not despising himself, though he was a tax collector. I tell you, this man went down to his home justified, but the other not. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”



FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Tony Monastra, 2119 Willow Cove Marblehead, OH 43440; Patti Owens, 311 Woodbridge Road, Vermilion, OH 44089; Basil Glovinsky, 1007 Glendale Drive, Port Clinton, OH 43452; Subdeacon Roger Pinta, P.O. Box 39, Middle Bass, OH 43446; Diane Tryon, 109 Joslyn Street, Arcadia, OH 44804; Ed & Irene Vangeloff, 454 Strouse Lane, Sandusky, OH 44870

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| MON. Feb 26 | St. Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza; 2 Peter 1:20-2:9, Mk. 13:9-13 |
| TUE. Feb 27 | Repose of St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn; 2 Peter 2:9-22, Mk. 13:14-23 |
| WED. Feb 28 | Venerable Basil the Confessor; 2 Peter 3:1-18, Mk. 13:24-31 |
| THU. Feb 29 | Venerable John Cassian the Roman; 1 John 1:8-2:6, Mk. 13:31-14:2 |
| FRI. Mar 1 | Martyr Eudokia of Heliopolis; 1 John 2:7-17, Mk. 14:3-9 |
| SAT. Mar 2 | Hieromartyr Theodotus, Bishop of Cyrenia; 2 Tim 3:1-9, Lk. 20:2-8 |
| 4:00 PM | VESPERS |
| SUN. Mar 3 | 39th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – Tone 6 Sunday of the Prodigal Son |
| 9:10 AM | HOURS |
| 9:30 AM | DIVINE LITURGY Followed by Coffee Hour |



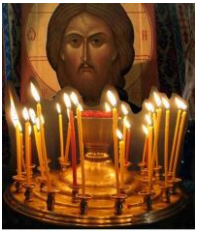
FEBRUARY CANDLE SPONSORS

Altar Candles: Available (\$50); **Chandelier:** Ron & Bobbie Royhab, In memory of newly departed Paula Baymiller (\$50); **Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** Greg Mazur, In loving memory of dad, Steve February 6, and in loving birthday memory of mom Margaret, February 19 (\$25); **Candles at the Cross:** Laura Kovach, In memory of my dad Steven and birthday memory of my mom Margaret (\$20); **Candles at St. Sophia Icon:** For Safety and Health of Nicholas, Tikhon, Gleice, & Chloe (\$20)



FEBRUARY REPOSED

Helen Hritsko (1908) No date provided; Alexandra Brendza (1909) No date provided; Steve Danchisen (1909) No date provided; **2-** Nancy Pipenur (2018); **5-** Peter Kowal (2004); **6-** Steve Michael Mazur (1970); **6-** Elizabeth Kravetz Mc Mahon (1984); **12-** Glenn Schoonmaker (2002); **12-** Lawrence Beck (2018); **14-** Rose Polosky (1953); **17-** Stanley Guzy (1986); **20-** Linda Sue Alber & infant (1969); **20-** Dc. Mike Cinalli (2020); **21-** Mary Tomka Matso (1956); **21-** John Richard Elchisco (2021); **22-** Metro Mazur (1973); **22-** Marguerite Bird (2022); **23-** George Elchisco Sr. (1961); **26-** Elizabeth Millie (1998); **29-** Mary Uka Kostearly (1996)



VIGILS FOR FEBRUARY 18

Susan Guzy 2 In loving memory of Uncle Stan, friend Linda & infant child, Vichnaya Pamyat, Safe travel for brother Gary

Laura Kovach 3 For health and/or healing of Cooper S., Marty B., Kathi S., Jim K., Ron R., Diane T., Ruth S., James W., Patti O., Tony M., Hannah S., Barbara D., Pauline O., Margi H., Betty K., Ben F., Mark M., Dana M., Bodhi C., Sharon D., John D., and Karen D. Memory Eternal to Chuck Wiedenhoft
Birthday memory to mom and birthday blessings and many years to Wayne and Sonya

Diane Tryon 6 Birthday Blessings to Mike (2/19), Birthday Blessings to Uncle Bill(2/26), special intentions

Sandy Martin 2 For the health of Pam, In loving memory of Marg, Special intentions

Natalie Twarek 8 God's blessing to Cooper, Maliyah and newborn Reece, In loving memory of Chuck Wiedenhoft, In loving memory of Marsha Lord, For the health and recovery of Ruth, Health and recovery of Diane, Health and recovery of Ron, Health and healing for Father's dad Michal and Matushka's mom Barbara, For the health and recovery of child Ambrielle, and child Ezra, Rita Mumea(Gigi), Basil, Tony, Bev, Ed, Irene, Father David, Pauline, Judy, Tina, Carole, Gary, Sharon, Tina's dad, Earl, Tom, Sonya, Margi & Joe, Betty, Jackie, MaryAnn & Bob, Bodhi, Stella, Jake, Pat

PRAYER LIST

Parishioners & Family: Patti Owens / Tony Monastra / Barbara Wroblewski / Michal Tomáš / Ruth / Basil Glovinsky / Dale / Sophie / Jeanne Smith / Carol / David Martin / Fred Soski / Chris Hannon / Subdeacon Roger Pinta / Ed Vangeloff / Irene Vangeloff / Diane Tryon / Sonja Rose / Ron Royhab / James Bargdill / John Beadle / Carole Conaway / Gary Conaway / Sharon Dietrich / Michael Glovinsky / Shirley Gresh / Joseph Habegger / Elaine Hileman / Betty Kovach / Child Stella Miller / William Pipenur / Earl Rindfleisch / Helen Jean Rofkar / George Royhab / Marianne Royhab / Stephanie Royhab / Kathy Jacob / the child Bodhi Cassell / Gleice, her unborn baby & Chloe / Carol / Debbie & Marco / Nora. **Other Requests:** Susanne / Barbara Heffernan, Rita Mumea / Charles Schlett / Kathy Debevits / Maxwell Chaney / Sidharth Bijilani – friend of Subdeacon Roger and Debbie Pinta / Anthony / Archpriest David Lis / Bishop Matthias / Archpriest Emilian & Matushka Laryssa Hutnyan / Kurt Franck / Ben Franklin / Donald Gresh / Mark Ludvik / Robert Piznar / Mark Masica / Valerie Ritzenthaler / William / Rick Rowe / Chuck Wiedenhoft / Chris. **Military:** Craig Cassell / Jake Ellithorpe / Jordon Fulton / Justin Issler / Tikhon / Nicholas / & All Military



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

25 – Fellar (Michael) Fay; **25** – Heidi Golob *; **26** – Basil Glovinsky



READERS LIST

Sunday Mar 3 – Natalie
Sunday Mar 10 – Jake
Sunday Mar 17 – Tim
Sunday Mar 24 – Ron



ATTENDANCE

02/17 Vespers, 11 attending (1 guest); 02/18 Divine Liturgy, 22 attending (3 guests)



CHARITY OF THE MONTH

“St. Vladimir Seminary” is the charity we donate to for the month of February.



SUNDAY OFFERING

Sunday, February 18, 2024

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Tithe | \$ 705.00 |
| Candles | \$ 24.00 |
| Vigils | \$ 55.00 |
| Donations | \$ 41.00 |
| St. Vladimir Seminary (Feb.) | \$ 150.00 |
| Total: | \$ 975.00 |

May the Lord reward you for your financial and spiritual support!



THANK YOU, CARD, RECEIVED

Our parish received a Thank you card from Fr. David Lis. Please see the text of the card in the bulletin and on the bulletin board.

UP-COMING EVENTS IN OUR PARISH – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



- Mar 10th** Daylight Saving Time begins (Sunday) 🕒
- Mar 10th** Meetfare Sunday – Potluck after the Divine Liturgy
- Mar 17th** Cheesefare Sunday (*Maslenitsa*) – Potluck after the Divine Liturgy
- Mar 18th** Beginning of the Great Fast (*Monday*)
- Mar 25th** ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS (*Monday*)
- Apr 28th** Palm Sunday
- May 5th** GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA
- Consider sponsoring a Sunday coffee hour following the Divine Liturgy



CLEANING SCHEDULE

- Feb 26, Basil & Tim
- Mar 4, Susan
- Mar 11, Jean
- Mar 18, Stephanie



Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

Commemorated on February 25

Beginning of the Lenten Triodion

The Sunday after the Sunday of Zacchaeus is devoted to the Publican and the Pharisee. At Vespers the night before, the *Triodion* (the liturgical book used in the services of Great Lent) begins.

Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee who scrupulously observed the requirements of religion: he prayed, fasted, and contributed money to the Temple. These are very good things, and

should be imitated by anyone who loves God. We who may not fulfill these requirements as well as the Pharisee did should not feel entitled to criticize him for being faithful. His sin was in looking down on the Publican and feeling justified because of his external religious observances.

The second man was a Publican, a tax-collector who was despised by the people. He, however, displayed humility, and this humility justified him before God (Luke 18:14).

The lesson to be learned is that we possess neither the Pharisee's religious piety, nor the Publican's repentance, through which we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ's teaching, asking Him to be merciful to us, deliver us from sin, and to lead us on the path of salvation.

Two weeks before the beginning of the Fast, as part of our preparation for Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha, the Church prescribes the reading of Saint Mark's Gospel. From Monday to Friday the focus is on the end times, and the Savior's death and burial.

The Publican, the Pharisee, and the struggle for humility

by Fr. Steven Kostoff

The Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee confronts us with a stark contrast between religious pride and self-righteousness on the one hand, and heartfelt humility and repentance on the other hand. The pharisee, of course, is the one who manifests pride, and it is the publican who manifests humility. The Lord closes this short parable by declaring the Pharisee "condemned" and the publican "justified." This is a genuine "reversal of fortune," upending our preconceived notions of piety and righteousness as forcefully as it must have struck those who initially heard the parable as delivered by the Lord. Yet, that reversal of fortune should not obscure other notable factors also working within this parable.

Christ is not condemning the actions of the pharisee. The Lord is not telling us through this parable that the pharisee – or anyone else, and that includes us – is wasting both time and energy by going up to the temple to pray, by fasting and by tithing. These are *not* being condemned as empty practices, consigning all such practitioners to the barren realm of hypocrisy and religious formalism. We, as contemporary Christians, are encouraged to enter the church with regularity and offer our prayer to God, to practice the self-restraint and discipline of fasting, and to share our financial resources with the generosity implied by the biblical tithe. We could add other practices to that. In fact, we would do well to imitate the outward *actions* of the pharisee in practicing our Faith!

Yet, on a deeper and far more significant level, the pharisee got it all wrong. He was consumed by a *self*-satisfied and *self*-righteous interior attitude that left no room for God to transform him by divine grace. The Pharisee's prayer was seemingly directed to God, but in reality, it was an exercise in *self*-congratulations (for not being like other sinful men). Here was a man who did not suffer over low *self*-esteem! The pharisee was *self*-centered, but not *God*-centered. Something went wrong, and the *self*-replaced God as the center of his energy and passion. The exterior forms of piety that he practiced were disconnected from the interior realm of the heart, where God is meant to dwell and, again, transform the human person from within, so that each person becomes less self-centered and more God-centered with time and patience.

Based on our knowledge of the role of the publican in first century Israel, we can be assured that Christ was not "justifying" the particular "lifestyle" that made the publicans such notorious and despised figures of that world. In fact, they were always included with "harlots" when reference was being made to the marginalized, if not ostracized, members of first century Judaism. Rather, the publican was declared "justified" for the very fact that he recognized and was profoundly struck by just how sinful he had become in cheating and defrauding his neighbor as a hated tax-collector working for the occupying Roman authority. He had the experience of true contrition of heart. He realized that he stood self-condemned before the Lord, yet he did not despair but cried out plaintively, "God, be merciful to me a

sinner!” Human persons are not saved as sinners, but as sinners who in humility repent before God and then offer the fruits of repentance.

The hymnography for the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee exhorts us to flee from pride and to embrace humility. We live in a culture obsessed with the self and thus not only susceptible, but openly promoting, both pride and vainglory. “In your face” is widely seen as a “heroic” gesture of self-defiance and legitimate self-promotion. Humility is treated as weakness and ineffectual for “getting ahead” or for fulfilling one’s desires. We hear the voice of the Lord and we hear the voice of the world. It is our choice as to which voice we will listen to. And that choice will be determined to a great extent by just what the desires that move us to action are actually for. “For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.”



To obey like the Pharisee and repent like the Publican

by Archpriest Andrey Lemeshonok

Our preparation for Lent has begun, drawing near the moment in our lives when we must answer the call to follow in Christ’s footsteps to Golgotha throughout the Great Lent and bear witness to His victory over death. These upcoming weeks set the tone for a deeper and richer spiritual life. Lent, and indeed our entire lives, serve as our preparation for the Resurrection.

Our aim is to overcome our old selves, rise above the world, and defeat the sin that has turned humanity into the walking dead. The words we hear at the Church, and all the spiritual nourishment we receive, should guide us towards a life that differs from the norms of this world, where people oppress, torment, maim, and kill one another. Could God have created such a life? Certainly not! It is

sheer madness and the doors of hell where people refuse to see beyond their self-interest.

Let us take a moment to question how we view others, even within the Church. When someone walks in wearing an expensive dress, we may assume they have something to donate and treat them with extra care and attention. However, when a disheveled, homeless person arrives with an off-putting smell, we may view them with disdain, assuming they are only there to ask for money. This kind of thinking reeks of hypocrisy and falsehood, creating an ugly discordant note to which, unfortunately, we become accustomed all too easily.

We must all live differently, and we should start making changes now. Instead of continually claiming that we are not ready and need more time to think and gather ourselves, we should take action. We often resolve to find time to pray, contemplate, and repent, but only after we have cleared the most urgent matters from our way and are no longer in a rush. However, this is all nonsense! It is a lie and a deception of the world. By being lenient on ourselves, we are squandering precious time.

We should engage in a constant battle with our old selves, our limited reasoning, and our simplistic view of what is happening to us and around us. Today, the Holy Church is teaching us a lesson in life as we read today’s Gospel passage.

Two people entered the temple. One was a zealous follower of the law, doing everything right. But where did that lead him? Filled with pride and self-admiration, he said: “I am better than this sinner who came here for who knows what reason; this place isn’t for him. It’s for people like me, good, spiritual, decent people...” However, the tax collector felt his guilt before God and uttered words repeated by humanity for thousands of years: “*God, have mercy on me, a sinner*” (cf. Luke 18:13). Of course, he left the temple justified by God because these words encapsulated his whole life.

Any person coming from the world will keenly be aware of their sin. Some residents of our farm estates have served decades of prison time. Their whole lives have been anything but normal. But how can someone like you and I begin to live our lives obeying the law like the Pharisee, but also repenting as deeply as the Tax Collector? Now there's a formidable challenge!

How can we learn to do all that, but not consider it our own? That would be genuine art, the art of spiritual life. Today, we do not have a fraction of the Pharisee's obedience, but are as proud as a dozen of these Pharisees. We are keen to judge and condemn. We claim to know it all. If someone reasons or corrects us, we protest with vehemence and argue our case with all our might. So we have a major task ahead: to prepare ourselves for the life to come, the resurrection from the dead, and do so in the remaining few months of Lent. We must travel the vast distance from living to the letter, to living in the spirit, and our every experience during this time should bring us ever closer to this goal.

No pleasures of the secular world could ever match the joy that descends upon the people who come to church on the Paschal night. No one in the world could give it to us; it simply is not there. Despite all the hustle, senselessness, and chaos of the world, we must learn to see God and rejoice, without recoiling from doing what we must. We must remain living people.

For example, I am concerned (and maybe you are, too) that after taking Communion, the holy gift of life, we forget about it soon after leaving the church, engaging in empty conversations and entertaining idle thoughts. But does it mean that we should lock ourselves inside the Church and stay there? No, it means that we should bring the church to our homes and our hearts. "*You are the temple of the Holy Spirit*," says the apostle Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19). We should live as Orthodox, seeing God in every person, glorifying Him, and thanking Him for all He sends. This should be the foundation upon which to build our future lives, and the upcoming fast is the time to lay it.

During Lent, some will engage in what one might call "Orthodox yoga." They will puff themselves up like balloons and declare, "I am an ascetic. I am not like this glutton or that other sinner, or some other worthless man." But deep in their hearts, they will feel a deep void. Today, the Pharisee from the Gospel said something similar. He said it with a sense of self-worth, and that is the saddest part. And the Tax Collector? Who could feel more worthless? An extortionist, a bribe-taker!

We should not judge; we understand that these were people of their time, and they were also imperfect. But this man, a sinner, somehow found his way to the temple, and that was no accident or play of chance. His soul was so contrite that he could not bring himself to raise his eyes. He felt shame; his conscience had come to life. He came to the Holy Temple, and he realized his unworthiness. He venerated a relic, and he felt guilt. He realized how many people he had hurt, how many he had deceived, and how normal it had become for him!

He was going on with his life, without giving the slightest thought about the pain he was causing others by robbing them of their possessions. He was intent on getting rich, he was living for himself, like everybody else in his circle. All of a sudden, he understood that he was not living, but was tormenting himself and others. He was bringing great suffering upon his soul, because the wealth in his coffers was not giving him any contentment. What could he buy with all that money? Could he buy love, loyalty, friendship? He had lost it all, he had traded it for the petty trinkets of this world. The man prayed - and this prayer is still one of our favorites - "*God, have mercy on me, a sinner*" (cf. Luke 18:13). He beat his chest and asked God for forgiveness, admitting his sin and repenting it in all sincerity. And the Lord accepted his prayer. It was short, a cry of his anguished soul. He did not read canons, an akathist, or Psalter. He simply realized the state he was in, and knew that he could not continue business as usual. Now was his chance to change, right here in this temple.

Surely his life transformed, as he walked home justified. And that man, the Pharisee who was doing everything right, may never have understood that his prayer had not been accepted. God's love is not

something to be earned. The same universal law is at work everywhere and at all times: the more of God's love we witness in our lives, the more we get to realize our unworthiness.

The gift of God's grace makes the soul sore and causes it pain to the extent that our past lives become untenable. That way, the soul dies to the sin that rests within it. But who would want to receive this kind of love? Who wants Golgotha? Who wants to be crucified tomorrow, and let their old self die? Nobody! Everybody wants to be pitied, sympathized with, and understood instead. That's what the human condition is like nowadays.

Tragically, the Lord has told us all we need, but we pretend that we do not understand. Turn your other cheek? What do you mean? You get hit — so hit back even harder; you get offended — so take back yours and retaliate.

In plain terms, the message from the Lord that we are trying so hard to decline is utterly clear: we should live in love, even towards our enemies, and humbly recognize our own faults while maintaining faith in God. This is the essence of our "spiritual arithmetic." Yet so many of us are still refusing to make sense of the simple equation: me + God + other.

Dear Father Peter and Matushka Michelle,
Thank you for joining me at
my Mom's funeral — it was
good to meet the two of you.
Please convey to everyone at
Holy Assumption Church my
deepest appreciation for the
flowers, their prayers and
their support as I continue
to mourn my Mom's passing
into Eternal Life.
Father David

To know you are with us
in our time of sorrow,
Sharing our prayers,
today and tomorrow.

God gives us comfort
in the form of family and friends
May His peace be with you,
His love never ends.

By the family of
HELEN M. LIS