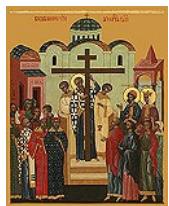


Bulletin

Week of February 1st to February 7, 2026



Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE — Tone 1

Beginning of the Lenten Triodion. Forefeast of the Meeting

Martyr Tryphon of Lampsacus near Apamea in Syria (250). Martyrs Perpetua, a woman of Carthage, and the Catechumens: Saturus, Revocatus, Saturninus, Secundulus and Felicitas (202-203). Ven. Peter Galata, Hermit, near Antioch in Syria (403/404). Ven. Vendemianus (Bendemianus), Hermit, of Bithynia (ca. 512). Ven. Bridget (Brigid) of Ireland (523).

Weekly Liturgical Service Schedule

Sunday February 1, 2026

9:15 am - Hours
9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

Weekly Schedule

Sunday February 1st

- Inquirers & Catechism classes following Liturgy

**The Gratitude of the Publican
By Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh**

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

How short, and how well-known today's parable, and yet, how intense its message, how challenging...

It is intense in its very words: two men come into the church of God, into a sacred realm—which belongs to Him unreservedly in a world that is otherwise lost to Him. They enter His Divine Realm. And one of the men walks boldly into it and takes a stand before God. The other one comes and doesn't even dare cross the threshold—he is a sinner, and the Realm is holy, like the space around the Burning Bush in the desert that Moses could not enter without unshod feet, in adoration and the fear of God.

And how different are the words they speak! Apparently, the Pharisee praises God, he gives Him glory—but for what? Because He has made a man like him, a man so holy, so worthy of Him, worthy of God; a man who not only keeps all the commandments of the Law, but goes beyond what God Himself has commanded, and can expect of man. Indeed, he stands before God praising Him that he, the Pharisee, is so wonderful that he is God's own glory, the shining, the revelation of God's holiness...

The Publican does not dare enter into the holy Realm of God.

And the parable is clear: the man who came and stood brokenhearted, ashamed of himself, knowing that he is unworthy of entering this sacred space goes back home forgiven, loved, indeed: accompanied by God Himself Who came into the world to save sinners and Who stands by everyone who needs Him, who recognizes his need—or not—for salvation.

The Pharisee goes home, but he goes home less forgiven; his relationship with God is not the same—he is at the center, God is peripheral to him, He is at the heart of things, and God is subservient to him. It does not mean that what he did was worthless; it simply means that as far as he is concerned, it has born no fruit of holiness in him. The deeds were good, but they were spoiled, poisoned by pride, by self-assertion. The beauty of what he did was totally marred because it was addressed neither to God nor to his neighbor—it was turned in on his own self. And we are told that this pride has despoiled this man, has taken away from him the fruits of his good works, the fruit of his outward faithfulness to the law of God; that only humility could have given him and his action full meaning; that only humility could have made his actions into life, into the waters of life gushing into eternity.

But then, the question is before us: how can we learn anything about humility if that is the absolute condition to be not like the barren fig tree, but fruitful, to be a rich harvest which people may be fed.

I do not know that we can move from pride and vanity into humility in a moment unless something so tragic happens to us that we see ourselves and discover that we are completely bereft of everything that supported our sinful, destructive, barren condition. But there is one thing we can do: however much we think that we are possessed of all sorts of gifts of heart, mind, body, and soul, however fruitful our action may be, we can remember the words of Saint Paul: O, man! What have you got which was not given you?! And indeed, he echoes at this point what Christ said in the first Beatitude, the Beatitude that opens the door to all other Beatitudes; the Beatitude that is the beginning of understanding: Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those who know, not only with their intellect—but at least with their intellect!—that they are nothing, and they possess nothing which is not a gift of God.

We were called into being out of naught without our participation; our very existence is a gift! We were given life, which we could not create or call out of ourselves. We have been given the knowledge of the existence of God, and indeed, a deeper, more intimate knowledge of God. All this is gift! And then, all that we are is a gift of God: our body, our heart, our mind, our soul. What power do we have over them when God no longer sustains them? The greatest intelligence can suddenly be swallowed into darkness by a stroke; there are moments when we are confronted with a need that requires all our sympathy, all our love—and we discover that our hearts are made of stone and of ice... We want to do good, and we cannot; Saint Paul knew this already when he said: The good which I love, I don't do, and the wrong which I hate I do continuously... And our body depends on so many things!

And what of our relationships, of the friendships that are given us, the love that sustains us, the comradeship—everything that we are and possess is a gift. What is the next move: isn't it gratitude? Can't we turn to God not as a pharisee, priding ourselves in what we are and forgetting that all of it is His, but turning to God and saying, "O, God! All this is a gift from You! All that beauty, intelligence, sensitive heart, all the circumstances of life are a gift! Indeed, all those circumstances, even those that frighten us, are a gift because God says to us: I trust you enough to send you into the darkness to bring light! I send you into corruption to be the salt that stops corruption! I send you where there is no hope to bring hope, where there is no joy to bring joy, no love to bring love... and one could go on, on, on, seeing that when we are sent into the darkness it is to be God's presence and God's life. And that means that He trusts us—He trusts us, He believes in us, He hopes everything for us: isn't that enough to be grateful for?

But gratitude is not just a cold word of thanks. Gratitude means that we wish to make Him see that it was not all given in vain, that He did not become man, live, and die in vain. Gratitude means a life that could give joy to God. This is the challenge of this particular parable...

Yes, the ideal would be for us to be humble. But what is humility? Who of us knows the answer, and if someone does know it, who can communicate it to everyone who doesn't know? But we all know gratitude; we know the small ways and aspects of it! Let us reflect on it and let us in an act of gratitude recognize that we have no right to be in God's own realm, and yet He lets us in! We have no right to commune with Him either in prayer, or in the sacrament and yet He calls us to commune with Him! We have no right to be His children, to be brothers and sisters of Christ, to be the dwelling place of the Spirit, and yet He grants it all in an act of love!

Let each of us reflect and ask himself: in what way can we be so grateful that God might rejoice that He has not given these gifts in vain, that He has not lived and died in vain, that we have received the message. And if we grow in a true depth of gratitude, at the depth of gratitude we will fall down, adore the Lord, and learn what humility is—not in abasement but adoration, in the awareness that He is all we possess, all that we are, and that we are open to Him as the rich earth is open to the plough, to the sowing, to the seed, to the sunshine, to the rain—to everything in order to bring forth fruit. Amen!

What is the Lenten Triodion in the Orthodox Church?

The ecclesiastical book that contains the divine services including hymns and biblical readings for every day of the Lenten season, beginning with the "Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee" and concluding on "Great and Holy Saturday". The term "Triodion" originates from the Greek Τριώδιον, meaning "three songs." This liturgical text encompasses prayers and scriptural readings from Genesis, Exodus, Proverbs, and Job for Great Lent, Holy Week, and the three weeks leading up to Lent.

The Lenten Triodion intricately weaves penitential themes with the anticipation of Paschal joy, echoing Christ's teachings on fasting (Matthew 6:16-17). It presents fasting not as a mere ritual obligation but as a spiritual celebration, inviting Christians to experience Lent as a period of inner renewal and joyous preparation for the Resurrection.

Commentaries on the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

Elder Ambrose of Optina said:

"Repentance and humility are more important and higher than all of the other virtues, continuing until the end of our life. Referring to the words of the Prophet David, Saint John Climacus writes, "I did not fast, I did not keep vigil, I did not sleep on the bare earth, but I humbled myself and the Lord saved me."

Saint John of Kronstadt:

"When the foolish thought of counting up any of your good works enters into your head, immediately correct your fault and rather count up your sins, your continual and innumerable offences against the All-Merciful and Righteous Master, and you will find that their number is as the sand of the sea, whilst your virtues in comparison with them are as nothing."

Saint Peter of Damascus:

If repentance is too much for you, and you sin out of habit even when you do not want to, show humility like the publican; this is enough to ensure your salvation.

Schedule of Weekly Services

Saturday February 14th

4:30 pm - Great Vespers

Sunday February 22nd

Following Divine Liturgy, Forgiveness Sunday Vespers

Monday February 23rd

5:30 pm - Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

Wednesday February 25th

5:30 pm – Presanctified Liturgy

Inquirers & Catechism Class

Classes will be on Sundays following Divine Liturgy. For those new to understanding Orthodoxy or for those who want to expand your foundation, please join us for our classes. Please check the schedule for changes.

tithe.ly.com

Another way to "donate". This app can be downloaded to your phone and Holy Cross can be accessed via this app. Also, tithe.ly can be accessed through the church website www.HolyCrossFtMyers.org

Prayer Requests

Christopher Jacob (Edward Jacob)

Rose Gala

Heather (Helen)Auld

Anne and Scott Peatross

Nicholas Kowalski

James Clark – Parishioner of St. Herman's

Carolyn – Robert & Debra's Forster's daughter

Robert Kozena

Megan – David & Phyllis Bartos' daughter

Rosemary – Friend of David & Phyllis Bartos

Please pray for our families in Ukraine

Leonid, Nadiia, Andrii, Halyna,

Volodymyr, Maryna, Dmytro, Bohdan,

Nadiia, Oleksandr, Tetiana,

Roman, Mykola

Anatoly, Olga, Maria, Andrei

Please let us know of anyone you would like to add to the Prayer Lists.

God Grant You Many Years!

Birthdays

Debra Forster 2/05

Lisa Chmiel 2/07

Eugenia Spaulding 2/09

Herman Allerton 2/09

Lowell Benson 2/17

Anastacia Mascarelli 2/17

Oniko Mascarelli 2/21

Gregory Cross 2/22

Oleksandra Fucheevych 2/24

Robert (John) Beeson 2/28

2026 Monthly Donations for Church Votive Candles

The church uses 12-hour 51% Beeswax votives, which are a cleaner burning candle and protect the church walls from soot. The approximate monthly cost of these votives for weekend Vespers & Divine Liturgy is \$100.00 per month. If you would like to donate (as a memorial, thanksgiving, or just to donate), please see David Bartos. Thank you!

February
March
March Lent
April
Holy Week/Pascha
May
June
July
August
August Feast Days
September
October
November
December
December Feast Days

The Divine Liturgy

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
Variable Hymns and Readings

Tone 1 Troparion *(Resurrection)*

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!”

Tone 1 Troparion *(Forefeast)*

The celestial choir of heavenly Angels
bends down to the earth
and sees the First-born of all creation being carried into the Temple as a
Babe
by a Mother who has not known man,
and in amazement they sing along with us//
a hymn of the Forefeast.

Tone 4 Kontakion *(from the Lenten Triodion)*

Let us flee from the pride of the Pharisee!
Let us learn humility from the Publican's tears!
Let us cry to our Savior:
“Have mercy on us,//
O only merciful One!”

Tone 1 Kontakion *(Forefeast)*

The Word unseen with the Father,
now is seen in the flesh, ineffably born of the Virgin,
and is given into the arms of the priest and Elder.//
Let us worship Him, our True God.

Tone 1 Prokeimenon *(Resurrection)*

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us / as we have set our hope on Thee!
(Ps. 32:22)

V. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just!
(Ps. 32:1)

2 Timothy 3:10-15 (Epistle)

Brethren: But 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.

Tone 1

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

V. God gives vengeance unto me, and subdues people under me.
(Ps. 17:48)

V. He magnifies the salvation of the King and deals mercifully with David, His anointed, and his seed forever. (Ps. 17:51)

Luke 18:10-14 (Gospel)

“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, 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.”

Explanation of Today's Gospel Reading

By Blessed Theophylact
Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

Luke: 18:10-14. The Lord ceaselessly purges the passion of pride in many ways. This passion, more than any other, disturbs our thoughts, and for this reason the Lord always and everywhere teaches on this subject. Here He is purging the worst form of pride. For there are many offshoots of self-love. Presumption, arrogance, and vainglory all stem from this root. But the most destructive of all these kinds of self-love is pride, for pride is contempt of God. When a man ascribes his accomplishments to himself, and not to God, this is nothing less than denial of God and opposition to Him. Therefore, like enemy to enemy, the Lord opposes this passion which is opposed to Him, and through this parable He promises to heal it. He directs this parable towards those who trust in themselves and who do not attribute everything to God, and who, as a result, despise others. He shows that when righteousness—which is marvelous in every other respect and sets a man close to God—takes pride as its companion, it casts that man into the lowest depths and makes demonic what was God-like just a short time before.

The words of the Pharisee at first resemble the words of a grateful man. For

he says, *God, I thank Thee*. But the words that follow are full of foolishness. He does not say, “that Thou hast made me to depart from extortion and iniquities.” Instead he says, “*I thank Thee that I am not* an extortioner or worker of iniquity.” He attributes this accomplishment to himself, as something done by his own strength. How can a man who knows that what he has, he has received from God, [compare other men to himself unfavorably] and judge them? For certainly if a man believed that he had received as a gift good things that in truth belong to God, he would not despise other men. He would instead consider himself just as naked as his fellow men in regards to virtue, except that by the mercy of God his nakedness has been covered with a donated garment. The Pharisee is proud, ascribing his deeds to his own strength, and that is why he proceeds to condemn others. By saying that the Pharisee *stood*, the Lord indicates his haughtiness and lack of humility. In the same way that a humble-minded man is likewise humble in his demeanor, this Pharisee by his bearing displays his pride. Although it is also said of the publican that he stood, see what follows, he *would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven*, so that he was stooped in posture. But the eyes of the Pharisee, together with his heart, were lifted up to heaven in boastful exaltation. Nonetheless, how the Pharisee arranged the words of his prayer can still instruct us. First, he says what he is not, and then he declares what he is. After stating, *God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are*, naming, this, this and this, then he declares his good deeds, fasting twice a week and giving tithes of all that he possesses. [The order of his prayer shows us that] we must first refrain from wickedness and then set our hand to virtue. For one must not only turn away from evil but also do good (Ps. 33:14). In the same way, a man who wants to draw pure water from a muddy spring first cleans out the mud and only then can he draw pure water.

Consider this as well, that the Pharisee did not say, “*I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or an adulterer, as other men are*.” He could not endure even the association of his name with such vile terms, so he uses them in the plural, casting these terms at other men, and avoiding the singular, which might associate him with sin. Having said, *I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are*, by contrast he points to himself, saying, *I fast twice in the Sabbath*, meaning, twice in the week, for the week was called “the Sabbath,” taking its name from the last day of the week, the day of rest. The day of rest was called *Sabbat*, and the week was called *Sabbata*, being the plural form of *Sabbat*. Whence it is that *mian Sabatton* is the first day of the week, which we call “the Lord’s Day” [Sunday]. Among the Hebrews *mian* means the same thing as *first*.

There is also a more profound explanation of this parable. Against the passion of adultery, the Pharisee boasted of his fasting, for lustful desires arise from eating and drinking to excess. By restraining his body through fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, as was the practice of the Pharisees, he kept himself far from such passions. He also resisted extortion and injustice by giving tithes of all his possessions. I am so opposed to extortion and to wronging others, he says, that I give alms of everything I have. Some believe that a simple and single tithe is prescribed by the law; but those who carefully examine the law will find three forms of tithing prescribed. You may learn this from Deuteronomy if you apply yourself diligently (Dt. 12:11,17).

So much for the Pharisee. Now we turn to the publican and see that he is the Pharisee's exact opposite in every regard. He *stood afar off*, and kept himself at a great distance, not only in physical location, but in his demeanor, in his words, and by his compunction of heart. He was ashamed to lift up his eyes to heaven, for he considered his eyes unworthy of heavenly vision because they had desired to see and enjoy the good things of earth. And he smote upon his breast, striking his heart, as it were, because of its evil designs, and awakening it because it had been sleeping. The publican said no other words than, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. Because of all these things he *went down to his house counted righteous, rather than the other*. For every proud heart is unclean in the Lord's eyes, and *the Lord resisteth the proud but He giveth grace to the humble*. (Proverbs 3:37, I Peter 5:5)

So condemnation rightly falls upon the Pharisee, who attributed everything to himself and not to God and judged others for no reason whatsoever. *For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled and condemned by God; and he that humbleth himself when he is condemned by others shall be exalted and counted righteous by God*.

The Lord is saying, "You, O Christian, be the first to tell your sins, so that you may be counted righteous."

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (*Ps. 148:1*)
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!