

Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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35th SUNDAY OF PENTECOST -Tone 2. Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Martyrs Pamphilius the Presbyter, Valens the Deacon, Paul, Seleucus, Porphyrius, Julian, Theodoulos, Elias, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Daniel, in Palestine (307-309). St. Maruthas, Bishop in Mesopotamia (22). Persian Maartyrns in Mesopotamia (4th c.). St. Nikolai, Archbishop of Japan (1912).
1 Cor. 6:12-20 Luke 15:11-32

Announcements

Sunday Feb 16th – BBQ following Divine Liturgy

Church School and Fellowship following Divine Liturgy on Sundays.

Choir Rehearsal Saturday 3:30pm prior to Great Vespers.

Votive Candles: There is a sponsor for the month of February.

On Sunday, **April 8** -- Father will speak on the understanding the Christ The Conqueror of Hell after coffee hour.

Liturgical Schedule:

Divine Liturgy Sundays: 9:30 am - Great Vespers – Saturdays: 4:00pm

Memorial Saturday – Feb. 22 – Divine Liturgy 9:00am -- Saturday of Meatfare.

Bishop Thomas will attend Divine Liturgy on Saturday - Feb. 22 and will preside at the interment of his departed father Thomas Joseph with Fr. Leonid at Lee High Memorial Park on at 3:00 pm.

Sunday, April 1st – Forgiveness Vespers following Divine Liturgy.

Monday, Great Fast begins with the Great Cannon at 5:30 pm

Tone 2 Troparion (*Resurrection*)

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life immortal,
Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead.
And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out://
“O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!”

Tone 3 Kontakion (*from the Lenten Triodion ~ Prodigal Son*)

I have recklessly forgotten Thy glory, O Father;
and among sinners I have scattered the riches which Thou gavest me.
And now I cry to Thee as the Prodigal:
“I have sinned before Thee, O merciful Father;
receive me as a penitent, //
and make me as one of Thy hired servants!”

THE POWER OF SIN

"All men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one sees for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood, and in their path are ruin and misery. The way of peace they do not know, and there is no fear of God before their eyes. All have sinned, and all fall short of the glory of God." [St. Paul]

The idea of sin is very unsettling to most people, and talking about sin is even more disturbing. This is because sin tells us something terribly vile and ugly about ourselves and generates a painful response of culpability. But understanding sin also awakens us to the fact that we can aspire to something higher and be something noble.

We usually think of sin as something legalistic or juridical; as the violation of a rule or regulation. And so we identify sin as an external activity of behavior and mores. But the Christian idea of sin is understood essentially as an inward state of mind and spirit and being. It points to a discordant and fragmented divergence in our human consciousness and a corrupted evil condition of our human nature.

The biblical word for sin means *"missing the mark"*. The same word is used when describing an archer missing the bull's eye or a traveler making a wrong turn on the road. So sin means a deviation of our nature

from the good and an estrangement of our life from God. It is a personal alienation from the true substance of our existence. Our being and life are not centered in God but in some lesser mundane reality such as ourselves. Thus we have enabled sin to become empowered in us so that it operates as an impassioned energy moving us away from our target, which is our deified destiny of convergence in the Divine.

No human person is completely free from the power of sin. This means that there is a force within all of us which hinders us from being good and doing what is right and living according to God. It even leads us to do what is wrong and to be bad. And so we are chronic sinners, full of sin, not only in the sense that we commit evil acts but also in the sense that our very nature is moved by a sinful energy existing in us. There is a dynamic of sin within us that generates an impulse to evil.

St. Paul experienced this power of sin as a principle operating in his life and governing his behavior: "*I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want to do, but I do the very thing I hate. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. And I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is right evil lies close at hand. For in my inward self, I delight in the law of God but in my members I see another rule at war with the rule of my mind. And this rule makes me captive to the law of sin that lives in my members.*"

Because of this power of sin within us, we sin daily in word, deed and thought. In fact, our whole life is governed in one degree or another by this power sin. The really bad thing, however, is that many of us rarely if ever recognize our sin. And it is not unusual to meet people who are quite convinced that they have no sin. Such people live without a sense of sin. They are sinners in reality and commit sin every day. But they go throughout life without a personal consciousness of sin. This failure is very bad. For without knowing our sin, we can't make a true confession or begin the process of negating the power of sin in our life.

Confession is essential to overcoming the power of sin. But confession means recognizing the concrete reality and experience of sin. It also involves acknowledging such sin not only to ourselves but to God and our fellow human beings as well. Confession requires an actual awareness and an honest declaration of our total sinful self. It involves a vivid realization of our complete sinful nature together with a firm resolution to radically change oneself. And changing the self must be based on an awareness of definite transgressions and offenses which are then eliminated so that our consciousness and conduct are transformed.

This awareness of personal sin can only be experienced by the regular practice of watchfulness and by engaging in a daily self-examination of our consciousness and activities. We have to take a close look deep down inside our selves and search out the evil that lurks hidden in our hearts and minds. We have to probe the depths of our soul and evaluate our inner disposition of thought and feeling. We have to observe our self in every realm of our being, in relationship to everyone and everything. Only then will we see ourselves as we actually are.