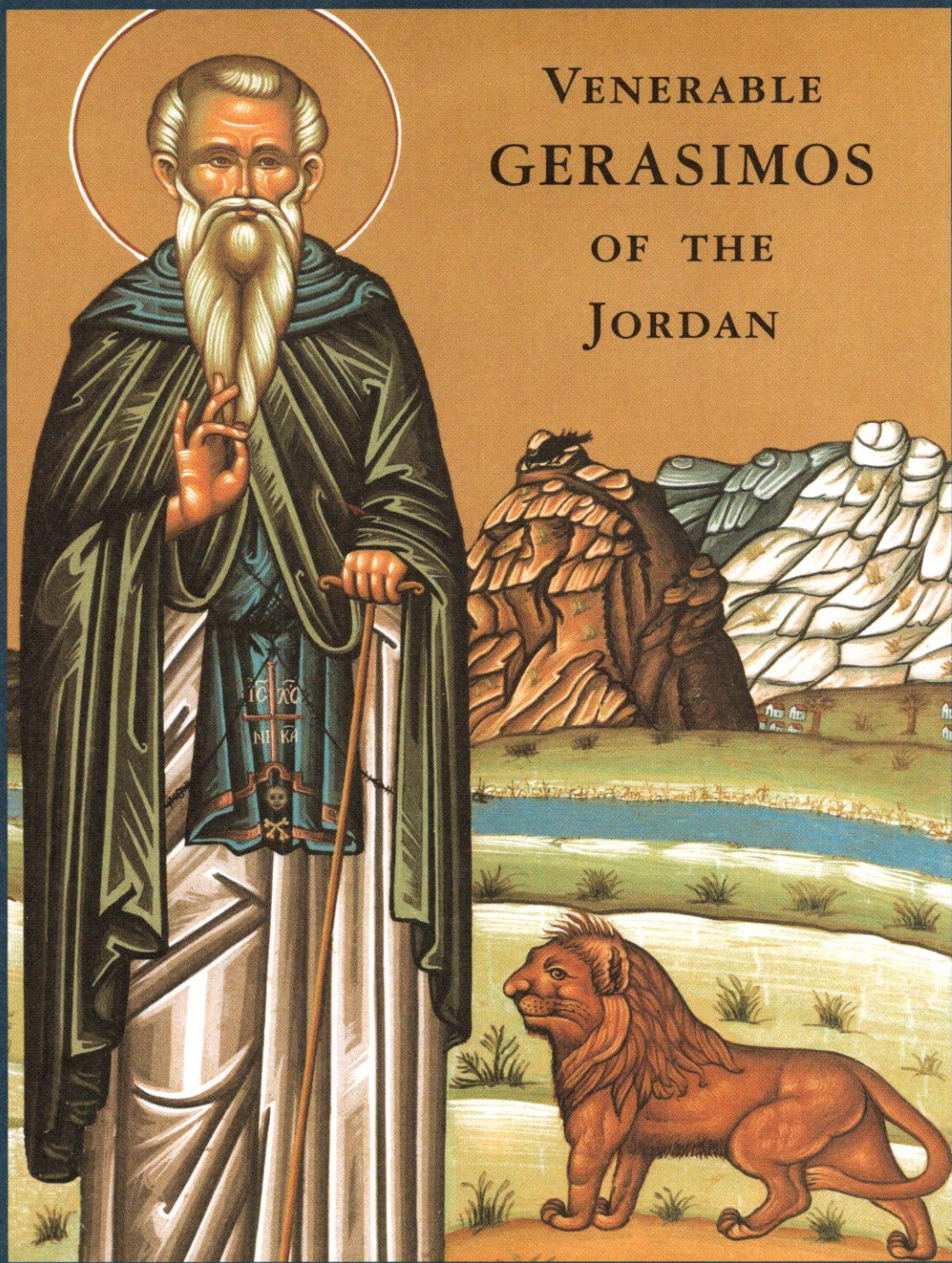


VENERABLE
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OF THE
JORDAN



Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church Bulletin
And Holy Transfiguration Chapel
A Parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople
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We would like to welcome all of our visitors and friends to Saint Nicholas Orthodox Parish. We would like to ask all of our new visitors to please sign our register so that we might be able to keep in contact with you about Parish celebrations and events. Through the intercession of Saint Nicholas we hope and pray that our community might continue to grow in numbers and in service to the Lord. Through your prayers and dedication of time, talents and donations, this can become a reality in all faith and in love.

In case of an emergency, please call Father Stephen day or night at the above telephone number.

March 3, 2024
Volume 17: Number 09
Celebrating our 17th Year of Serving the Lord
Schedule of Services and Activities

Sunday, March 3 – Sunday of the Prodigal Son – Tone 6
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Gus

Sunday, March 10 – Meatfare Sunday – Tone 7
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Gus

Sunday, March 17 – Cheesefare Sunday – Tone 8
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Gus
Forgiveness Service

Thursday, March 21
6:00 PM – Presanctified Liturgy

Sunday, March 24 – First Sunday of the Fast - Tone 1
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Stephen

SCRIPTURAL READINGS

Sunday of the Prodigal Son – Matins: Luke 24:36-53; Liturgy: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20;
Luke 15:11-32

Monday – 1 John 2:18-3:10; Mark 11:1-11

Tuesday – 1 John 3:10-20; Mark 14:10-42

Wednesday – 1 John 3:21-4:6; Mark 14:43-15:1

Thursday – 1 John 4:20-5:21; Mark 15:1-15

Friday – 2 John 1:1-13; Mark 15:22-25, 33-41

Saturday – 1 Corinthians 10:23-28; Luke 21:8-9, 25-27, 33-36; For the Deceased: 1

Thessalonians 4:13-17; John 5:24-30

Meatfare Sunday – Matins: Mark 16:9-20; Liturgy: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2; Matthew 25:31-
46

RETURN FROM EXILE (The Sunday of the Prodigal Son)

On the third Sunday of preparation for Lent, we hear the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Together with the hymns of this day, the parable reveals to us the time of repentance as man's return from exile. The prodigal son, we are told, went to a far country and there spent all that he had. A far country! It is this unique definition of our human condition that we must assume and make ours as we begin our approach to God. A man that has never had that experience, be it only very briefly, who has never felt that he is exiled from God and from real life, will never understand what Christianity is about. And the one who is perfectly "at home" in this world and its life, who has never been wounded by the nostalgic desire for another Reality, will not understand repentance.

Repentance is often simply identified as a cool and "objective" enumeration of sins and transgressions, as the act of "pleading guilty" to a legal indictment. Confession and absolution are seen as being of a juridical nature. But something very essential is overlooked - without which neither confession nor absolution have any real meaning or power. This "something" is precisely the feeling of alienation from God, from the joy of communion with Him, from the real life as created and given by God. It is easy indeed to confess that I have not fasted on prescribed days, or missed my prayers, or became angry. It is quite a different thing, however, to realize suddenly that I have defiled and lost my spiritual beauty, that I am far away from my real home, my real life, and that something precious and pure and beautiful has been hopelessly broken in the very texture of my existence. Yet this, and only this, is repentance and therefore it is also a deep desire to return, to go back, to recover that lost home. I received from God wonderful riches: first of all life and the possibility of enjoying it, to fill it with meaning, love and knowledge; then - in Baptism - the new life of Christ Himself, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the peace and the joy of the eternal Kingdom. I received the knowledge of God, and in Him the knowledge of everything else and the power to be a son or daughter of God. And all this I have lost, all this I am losing all the time, not only in particular "sins" and "transgressions", but in the sin of all sins: the deviation of my love from God, preferring the "far country" to the beautiful home of the Father.

But the Church is here to remind me of what I have abandoned and lost. And as she reminds me, I remember: "'I have wickedly strayed away from Your Fatherly glory," says the Kondak of the day, "and wasted with sinners the riches You gave me. Then do I raise

the Prodigal's cry to You, O bountiful Father: I have sinned against You; take me back as a penitent, and make me as one of Your hired servants . . ."

And, as I remember, I find in myself the desire to return and the power to return: . . . "I shall return to the compassionate Father crying with tears: Receive me as one of Your servants.."

One liturgical particularity of this "Sunday of the Prodigal Son" must be especially mentioned here. At Sunday Matins, following the solemn and joyful Psalms of the Polyeleion, we sing the sad and nostalgic Psalm 137: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, and we wept when we remembered Zion.. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. . .

It is the Psalm of exile. It was sung by the Jews in their Babylonian captivity as they thought of their holy city of Jerusalem. It has become forever the song of man as he realizes his exile from God, and realizing it, becomes man again: the one who can never be fully satisfied by anything in this fallen world, for by nature and vocation he is a pilgrim of the Absolute. This Psalm will be sung twice more: on the last two Sundays before Lent. It reveals Lent itself as a pilgrimage and repentance - as return.

THE SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

The Third Pre-Great Fast Sunday - Scripture Reading: Luke 15:11-32

"Brothers and sisters, let us learn the meaning of this mystery. For when the Prodigal Son ran back from sin to his father's house, his loving father came out to meet him and kissed him. He restored to the Prodigal the tokens of his proper glory. . ." Vespers for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

"The tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Him (Jesus), at which the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them'" (Luke 15:1). This was why Jesus told the parable of the Prodigal Son. Notice that Jesus does not rebuke them for their hypocrisy but gently tells them the parables of mercy in a language they could understand and to which they can relate. The crowning one is the prodigal son. Some commentators call it the Parable of the Loving Father. On this Third Pre-Fast Sunday, the Prodigal Son's sorrow for past sins is presented to us as the third requisite needed for true repentance (The first is the desire [Sunday of Zacchaeus]; and the second is humility [Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee].

Let's look at the characters of this parable. The younger son grossly insults his father by asking for his share of the inheritance. In effect he was saying, "Father, die so that I can have what is mine." To compound the sin, he goes far away and squanders it all on loose living. How often we think that because we are out of the sight of our guardians or loved ones that we are also out of God's sight as well. How foolish! Only when the son hits rock bottom does he come to himself and realize that he has sinned. We can only be truly ourselves when we are union with God, our Father. To be apart from Him is to be in sin and truly out of our senses. Total and complete unity will only be ours in the Kingdom.

The father waits with love and yearning for his son. "While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was deeply moved." He completely forgave and forgot his son's greed. He embodied in himself the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "Can a mother forget her infant. . . Even if she should forget I shall never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name" (Isaiah 49:15).

The elder son was enraged at the love, compassion and forgiveness of the father. He acted just like the Scribes and the Pharisees mentioned above. He really didn't realize how much the father also loved him. He didn't hear: "My son, you are with me always, and everything I have is yours." His heart was too hard to show any compassion or forgiveness or joy for his brother. He could not understand that "We had to celebrate and rejoice! This brother of yours was dead, and has come back to life. He was lost and is now found." May we ourselves not judge others and may we rejoice with those who are forgiven and repent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY - is expressed to the following: Wakako Alexander, 3/7 & Voni Perrine, 3/7. May God grant them a very happy birthday and keep them many, happy and blessed years!

REDNER FULL SALE SLIPS – are still being collected. Please save the whole slip.

READER MINISTRY:

March 3 –Margaret Perkins

March 10 – Subdeacon Kevin Minnich

March 17 – Christina Mentis

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE ILL – Metropolitan Antony, Father Geroge Bazylevsky, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Constantine Christo, Father Vasyl Dovhan, Father Oleh Hucul, Father Mark Leisure, Father John Nakonachny, Father James Norton, Father Paul Pappas, Father John Perich, Father Volodymyr Wronskyj, Pani Matka Lilly Lemar, Matushka Laura Odell, Matushka Lisa Weremedic, Jamison, Wakako Alexander, Theresa Barnes, Paul Calistor, Rita Cook, Dmitra Cookson, Davis William Doty; Steve Forte, Thomas Holt, Norma Husnick, Walter Katolic, Judith Kocinski, Kristina Koutsoudes, Olympia Koutsoudes, Frederick McCarthy, Bruce McGloan, Patricia McGloan, Stephen McNulty, Chritina Mentis, Connie Mentis, Olga Moniodes, Margaret Perkins, Barbara Perrigina, Michael Previte, Sandra Ramondi,Carolynn Ritter; Jim Saturno, Clay Seman, Gail Sherman, Lorraine Sherman, Gerald Sovinski, Diane Staples, Nicholas Taylor, Kathy Theodorakos, Merryl Trader, Ralph Vurgich, Cheryl Zabowski, Edward Zabowski, Markos Zerefos.



A TEACHER OF SPIRITUALITY



Have you ever heard the story of the man who walked along the banks of the Jordan River when a lion came along, limping, and in great pain? The man approached the animal, found a sharp splinter in the paw, extracted it and nursed the limb. It is said that the lion thereafter never left the side of his benefactor.

St. Gerasimos of the Jordan is that man. He was a great ascetic of the Church, and is said to have gone through the Great Fast taking no food except the Eucharist at the Liturgy.

The saint died in the year 475. When the lion found his friend gone, he searched everywhere for him. A faithful disciple, Abbot Sabbatios, tried to comfort the beast, but it seems nothing could be done. The abbot said, "Our old friend has gone away and left us orphans, and has migrated to the Lord; but here is food, take and eat." The lion would have no part of it. He kept roaming the cell, roaring with his head raised.

Finally, the lion was led to the grave of Gerasimos. The abbot, standing at the tomb, said: "Behold, here is where the old man is buried." The abbot knelt and wept at the grave of the one he loved as father. Then the lion, too, stretched himself over the grave, with his head on the sand, and moaned in sadness. There the beast stayed, refusing to be moved, until death came and released him from the bonds of this earth.

St. Gerasimos, called "the righteous," is a great teacher of spiritual life. He is an example for all to follow in this Lenten Season.