



The Publican and the Pharisee

Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

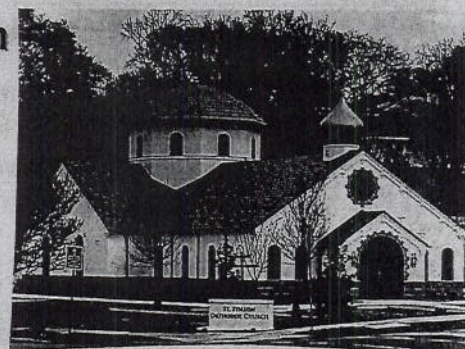
3101 Clairmont Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205

Church Tel. 930-9681 / 907-9447

Visit stsymeon.com

✠ **February 1, 2015** ✠

**Sunday of the
Publican and the Pharisee
Prefeast of the Entrance of Christ
into the Temple**



Martyr Tryphon of Syria (250) St. Brigid of Ireland

St. Tryphon of Pechenga, Finland (1583)

New Russian Hieromartyr Archpriest Peter Skipetrov of Petrograd (1918)

➤ *First Sunday Divine Liturgy in the New Temple!*

✠ *Many Years!* Newly Illumined Child Victoria Wells! Fast - Free Week!

➤ **First Feastday Liturgy in the New Temple:**

✠ **Tomorrow, February 2 ~ 10:00am – Feast of the Entrance of Christ in the Temple**

✠ **Baptisms – Sat. February 7, 3:00pm ~ Baby Mikhail Landar and Mikhail Ghilan**

✠ **Baptisms – Sat. February 21 3:00pm Adults ~ William Knarr, James (John) Fuller, Kristin (Anastasia) Taylor, Joanna (Georgia) Carter and Jason (Michael) Land**

"Truly the Temple is heaven upon earth; for where the throne of God is, where the awesome mysteries are celebrated, where the angels serve together with men, where the Almighty is unceasingly glorified, there is truly heaven and the heaven of heavens. And thus let us enter the Temple of God with the fear of God and with a pure heart, laying aside all passions and every worldly care, and let us stand in it with faith and reverence, with understanding attention, with love and peace in our hearts, so that we may come away renewed, as though made heavenly; so that we may live in the holiness natural to heaven, not binding ourselves by worldly desires and pleasures."

~ St. John of Kronstadt

✠ **Abba Leontius of the community of our Holy Father Theodosius (in Palestine) told us: After I took up residence in the Lavra, one Sunday I went to the Church to make my communion. When I went in, I saw an angel standing at the right side of the altar. After I had received my communion I went back to my cell and a voice came to me saying, "From the moment that the altar was consecrated I was commanded to remain here."**

Everyone who loves purity and chastity becomes the temple of God. ~ St. Ephraim the Syrian

Wisdom from Our Holy Father, St. John the Wonderworker of Kronstadt

- ✠ Edifying words, the writings of the Holy Fathers, prayers, and especially the words of the Word Himself, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, are indeed living water; water runs, and the words flow like water; water refreshes and gives life to the body, and edifying words animate the soul, filling it with peace and joy, or with compunction and contrition for sin.
- ✠ Watch your heart during all your life—examine it, listen to it, and see what prevents its union with the most blessed Lord. Let this be for you the science of all sciences, and with God's help you will easily observe what estranges you from God, and what draws you towards Him and unites you to Him. It is the evil spirit more than anything that stands between our hearts and God; he estranges God from us by various passions, or by the desires of the flesh, by the desires of the eyes, and by worldly pride.
- ✠ In all your works, either at home or at the place of your service, do not forget that all your strength, your light and your success are in Christ and His Cross; therefore, do not fail to call upon the Lord before beginning any work, saying, 'Jesus, help me! Jesus, enlighten me!' Thus your heart will be supported and warmed by lively faith and hope in Christ, for His is the power and glory, unto ages of ages
- ✠ The Lord said of His Church: 'I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Mt. 16:18). This is said of the pastors of the Church and of all true believers, as well as of all the Sacraments, all the dogmas and commandments of the Holy Orthodox Faith, and of all the offices of the Sacraments; for instance, the Liturgy, Holy Orders, Matrimony, Baptism, Chrism, Holy Oil, which have been established unto all the ages, and have already been in existence unchanged during many centuries. See how firm is the Church, founded by the Lord! Remember these words of the Lord and do not waver in the slightest degree when celebrating any of the Sacraments. Be firm as adamant.
- ✠ So do not let us stand in church in a state of spiritual prostration, but let the spirit of each one of us on such occasions burn in its working towards God. Even men do not much value the services which we render to them coldly, out of habit. And God requires our hearts. "My son, give Me thine heart." (Proverbs 23:26) Because the heart is the principal part of the man—his life. More than this, the heart is the man himself. Thus he who does not pray or does not serve God with his heart, does not pray at all, because in that case his body only prays, and the body without the mind is nothing more than earth. Remember, that when standing in prayer, you stand before God Himself, who has the wisdom of all. Therefore, your prayer ought to be, so to say, all spirit, all understanding.
- ✠ Lord! As it is natural to be the Prototype to attach, to assimilate to Itself Its images, to abide and to live in them, so, likewise, it ought to be natural to those who are created after Thine image to yearn with all their love, with all their ardor after their Prototype, and to attach themselves to It. But our greedy, sensual flesh, gross and inert, withdraws us from Thee. Fasting and abstinence are necessary for us whilst we crave after sensual gratifications. Strengthen us in abstinence!
- ✠ Do not fear bodily privations, but fear spiritual privations. Do not fear, do not be faint-hearted, do not be irritated, when you are deprived of money, food, drink, enjoyments, clothes, dwelling, even of your body itself; but fear when the enemy deprives your soul of faith, of trust and of love for God and your neighbor; when he sows hatred, enmity, attachment to earthly things, pride and other sins in your heart.

On the Meaning of the Temple – St. Symeon the New Theologian :

"The roof of any house stands upon the foundations and the rest of the structure. The foundations themselves are laid in order to carry the roof. This is both useful and necessary, for the roof cannot stand without the foundations and the foundations are absolutely useless without the roof—no help to any living creature. In the same way the grace of God is preserved by the practice of the commandments, and the observance of these commandments is laid down like foundations through the gift of God. The grace of the Spirit cannot remain with us without the practice of the commandments, but the practice of the commandments is of no help or advantage to us without the grace of God."

"For those who believe in Him, Christ will become all this and even more, beyond enumeration, not only in the age to come but first in this life, and then in the world to come. Though in an obscure way here below and in a perfect manner in the Kingdom, those who believe see clearly nonetheless and receive as of now the first-fruits of everything they will have in the future life. Indeed, if they do not receive on earth everything that was promised to them, they do not have any part of foretaste of the blessings to come, their higher hope being set on the hereafter. However, it is through death and the resurrection that God in His foresight has given us the Kingdom, incorruptibility, the totality of life eternal. Given these conditions, we unquestionably become partakers of the good things to come, that is, incorruptible, immortal, sons of God, sons of the light and of the day, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, since we carry the Kingdom within."

The Temple – St. Dorotheos of Gaza (5th C) - Humility and Patience

"Without these virtues [i.e., patience and bravery], one does not have the strength to fulfill any others. If he has no courage in his soul, he will not exercise patience; and without patience, nobody can fully succeed. This is why it says: 'By your patience, possess your souls' [Luke 21:19]. The person who desires to build a house, must also place mortar between the stones; since, without it, the stones rub against one another, and the house falls down."

"Mortar represents humility, because it comes from the earth and is under the feet of all. [We learn from] The Sayings of the Desert Fathers [that] every virtue which is done without humility is not a virtue: 'As it is impossible to build a ship without nails, so it is impossible to be saved without humility' [St. Amma Synkletike]. Therefore, every good work that a person performs must be done with humility; so that his work is preserved. The [physical dwelling] must also have beams which strengthen the house, join the stones and hold the house together as well as giving it great beauty. [In the house of the soul, the beams symbolize the virtue of discretion.]

"The roof [of the house of virtue] is love, which is the consummation of all virtue, just as the roof is the completion for the house (Colossians 3:14). After the roof comes the parapet around the roof. What is this parapet? It is written in the law: 'When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof; so that your children do not fall from it' (Deut. 22:8). The parapet is humility. This is the girding together of all the virtues. As every virtue must be performed with humility, as we said that each stone requires mortar, so also the fulfillment of each virtue needs humility. ... The more a person approaches God, the more he sees himself as a sinner." ~ St. Dorotheos of Gaza

St. Romanos the Melodist – from a hymn remembering the Ark:

"Obtain, therefore, some logs of wood that have not rotted. And you will make an ark as I wish it to be [Genesis 6:14-16], of the kind that I shall show you; so that it will bear, as in a womb, the seeds of future races. And make it like a house in the image of the church, in the proportions that I dictate to you. You will make the birds' nests; and having strengthened the ark with tar, build it three hundred cubits in length by 50 in width. Assemble and build the roof three hundred cubits high. You will prepare for the ark a second and third story, set in a cubit above. Make a door in the side of the ark. And in it, I shall protect you — as you cry out in faith: *"Save all from Thine anger, through Thy love for us, O Redeemer of all."*

About how Man is most dear to God and God to Man

"For I want not what is yours, but you" (1 Corinthians 12:14).

With these words, which could have only been spoken by the fiery apostolic love toward one's neighbor, is expressed the essence of the relationship of the Christian toward God and God toward the Christian. The love of God could very well say: "You, O Christian, fast for My sake; for My sake you distribute alms; for My sake you lift up heartfelt prayers; for My sake you build churches; for My sake you offer sacrifices and you perform many other good deeds. All of this is good, and all of this is pleasing to Me, but you are more precious to Me than all of this. In the end, I seek nothing of all of this rather, I seek you, only you."

The love of a Christian could very well say: "O Lord, You gave me health and that is good. You turn on the light; You permit the rain to fall; You refresh the air by Your thunder and that is good. You bestow wealth, wisdom, many years, offspring and many other good things which You bountifully place on the table of this life. All of this is good and overly-good. I receive all of this with gratitude. But, in the ultimate end, that is only the hem of Your garment.

Ultimately, I do not seek anything of that but You, O Lord, You alone I seek."

O my brethren, that is not God which is seen with the physical eyes, neither is that man which is seen with the physical eyes. That which is seen in the whole of nature is only something of God; and that which is seen in the physical garment is only something of man. Brethren, God is Love which heaven lowers to earth; Brethren, man is love which raises earth to heaven. O Lord, Lover of mankind, Creator and Almighty, take up Thine abode more and even more in us with Thy Life-giving Spirit that we may live; that we may be alive in Thy Kingdom without death!

- St. Nikolai of Serbia

TAKE OR RECEIVE?

As Orthodox Christians we know that the Sacrament of Holy Communion plays a central and essential role in our spiritual lives. If we take a moment to think about our participation in this Sacrament, we should realize that we do not "take" communion, but instead, we "receive" it. At first it may seem that there really isn't any difference between "taking" and "receiving." This difference can be more clearly seen, however, if we recognize that the Eucharist is a gift. We wouldn't speak of taking a birthday present from someone, but rather, we would receive it from them.

Holy Communion is a gift that Christ, through sacrificing Himself, has given to us. It is the precious body and blood of our Savior which He presents to us as an expression of His incredible love for us. Christ gives part of Himself to us as a gift so that we can grow closer to Him. As Orthodox Christians we work toward becoming one with God. Having the body and blood of Jesus Christ within us helps us to achieve this goal. It allows us to move toward salvation in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Knowing these things we can see how important it is for us to receive communion. During the Liturgy the priest says, "With the fear of God, faith, and love, draw near." Hearing these words we must keep in mind our fear of God's great power, our faith in Jesus Christ, and our love for Christ and for one another.

When we attend the Divine Liturgy it is essential that we are aware of what is taking place. Christ is giving us the greatest gift the world has ever known. He is sharing Himself with us so that we can attain eternal life with Him. Holy Communion is not something that we simply can take, but instead it is the gift of life that we are called to receive from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

~ Fr. Constantine Simeonedis, Orlando, FL

THE MYSTERY OF BAPTISM

By Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, from "Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition," St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press, 1994.

The Establishment of the Mystery of Baptism

In the first place in the series of Mysteries of the Holy Church stands the Mystery of Baptism. It serves as the door leading into the Kingdom of Grace, or the Church, and it grants access to participation in the other Mysteries. Even before the establishment of the Mystery of Baptism, the Lord Jesus Christ in His conversation with Nicodemus indicated the absolute necessity of it for salvation: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven.* When Nicodemus expressed his perplexity, How can a man be born when he is old, the Saviour replied that the new birth would be accomplished by water and the Spirit: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* (Jn 3:3-6)

The establishment of this grace giving Mystery occurred after the Resurrection of Christ. Having appeared to His disciples, the Lord said to them that He had received from His Father all authority in Heaven and on earth, and He continued: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,*

and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the World. (Mt 28:19-20) And to this He added: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* (Mk 16:16).

On the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, when after the speech of the Apostle Peter his listeners asked what they should do, the Apostle Peter said to them: *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* In the same book of the Acts are recorded several instances of baptism performed by the Apostles. Thus, the Apostle Peter baptized Cornelius (ch. 10), the Apostle Paul baptized Lydia and those of her household (ch. 16), as well as the guard of the prison with his whole household.

The Meaning of the Mystery

The mystical grace-given aspect of baptism is indicated in the above-cited passages of Sacred Scripture; baptism is a

new birth, and it is performed *for the salvation of men* (Mk 16:16). Moreover, setting forth the grace-given significance of Baptism, the Apostles in their Epistles indicate that in it we are *sanctified, cleansed, justified*; that in baptism we *die to sin* so as to walk in renewed life; we are *buried with Christ*, and we arise with Him. Christ loved, the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (that is, baptism with the utterance of the words instituted to accompany it: Eph 5:25-26). *Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God* (I Cor 6:11).

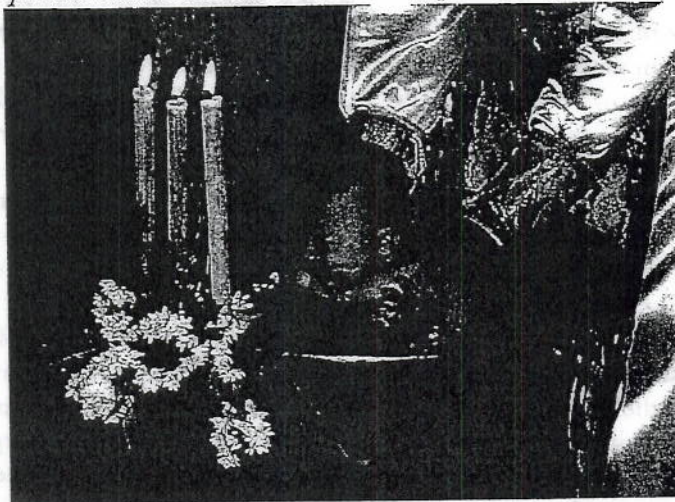
We are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4), baptism is called the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). As for the subjective side—the state of soul of the person being baptized—it is indicated by the Apostle Peter, who calls baptism the promise of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet 3:21). Through baptism at the same time one is joined to the Church.

The Means of the Performance of the Mystery

The comparison of baptism with a washing by water, with the grave, and other such things indicates that this Mystery is to be performed through immersion. The Greek word βαπτίζω (vaptizo) itself signifies "to immerse." Concerning the baptism of the eunuch by Philip, we read in

the book of Acts: They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip (Acts 8:38). As an exception, the Church acknowledges the Christian martyrdom of the unbaptized as a "baptism of blood." Baptism by sprinkling the Church acknowledges but does not approve it; it is considered as being not canonical.

The immersion in water is done three times with the pronouncement of the words: *"The servant of God (name) is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,"* in accordance with the commandment given by Christ Himself (Mt 28:19). Thus was it performed in the ancient Church. The Epistle of the Apostle Barnabas already mentions this, and Tertullian directly indicates that *the manner of baptism is prescribed*, indicating the words of the Savior concerning baptism; Tertullian also testifies to the triple immersion and likewise indicates one particularity:



that the one being baptized is asked to renounce satan and his angels, and then to confess the Faith.

In certain passages of Sacred Scripture there is mention of baptism *in the Name of the Lord Jesus* (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48). According to the interpretation of the ancient Fathers, the expression *in the Name of the Lord Jesus* means *according to the command and tradition of Christ*, or as a testimony of one's faith in Christ. Thus, this expression does not deny the fact of baptism *in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*, as it has seemed to certain historians of Christianity who are of the "rational school." It is entirely natural that the writer of the book of Acts, the Holy Apostle Luke, and St. Paul as well (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 1:13), when speaking of baptism, *in Christ* have in mind the differentiation of this baptism from the baptism of John or anything similar to it; baptism, *in Christ* is THE baptism into Christianity. Thus even now there is sung at Baptism, "*As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gal 3:27).

The Indispensability of Baptism

Since in baptism a man receives (in place of the old existence he had) a new existence and life and becomes a child of God, a member of the Body of Christ or the Church, an inheritor of eternal life, it is therefore evident that baptism is indispensable for all, including infants, so that growing in body and spirit they might grow in Christ. In the Apostolic Scriptures many times there is mention of the baptism of whole families (the house of Lydia, the house of the prison guard, the house of Stephan—1 Cor 1:16), and nowhere is it mentioned that infants were excluded from this. The Fathers of the Church, in their instructions to the faithful, insist upon the baptism of children. St. Gregory the Theologian, addressing Christian mothers, says, *Do you have an infant? Do not give time for harm to increase. Let him be sanctified in infancy, and from youth dedicated to the Spirit. Do you fear the seal because of the weakness of nature, as someone fainthearted and small in faith? But Anna even before giving birth promised Samuel to God, and after his birth she quickly dedicated him and raised him for the sacred garment, without fearing human weakness, but believing in God.*

However, it is indispensable in this matter that the persons who offer the infant for baptism should recognize all their responsibility for the raising up of the baptized infant in Christian faith and virtue. We read an instruction concerning this, for example, in the work *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, known under the name of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, which has always been highly respected by the Church: *It was pleasing to our divine instructors to allow infants also to be baptized, under the sacred condition that the natural parents of the child should entrust him to someone among the faithful who would instruct him well in divine subjects and then take*

care for the child as a father, given from above, and as a guard of his eternal salvation. This man, when he gives the promise to guide the child in pious life, is compelled by the bishop to utter the renunciations and the sacred confession.

How important for us is this instruction which comes from the ancient Christian Church! From it we see what responsibility the sponsor or godfather of the baptized person takes upon himself. How careful the parents of the child must be in choosing a sponsor! Of course, in a normal Christian family, the parents themselves usually teach their children the truths of faith and their moral duty. But the contemporary breakup of the foundations of social life compel one to be on guard so that the child will not remain without Christian guidance. And even under favorable conditions, a sponsor should keep close spiritual contact with his godchild and be ready at any needful moment to come to him with heartfelt Christian help.

The tenth paragraph of the Symbol of Faith reads: *I confess one baptism for the remission of sins.* This signifies that baptism in the Orthodox Church, as a spiritual birth, if it has been performed as a sacred rite correctly through triple immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, cannot be repeated.

Baptism: the Door to the Reception of Other Grace-giving Gifts

As we see from the above-cited statements of the holy Apostles, and likewise from the whole teaching of the Church, baptism is not only a symbol of cleansing and washing away the defilement of the soul, but in itself is the beginning and source of the Divine gifts which cleanse and annihilate all the sinful defilements and communicate a new way of life. All sins are forgiven, both original sin and personal sins; the way is opened for a new life; opened is also the possibility to receive the gifts of God.

Further spiritual growth depends upon the free will of man. But since temptation is capable of finding sympathy in the nature of man who from the day of his first fall into sin has had an inclination to sin, therefore moral perfection cannot be accomplished without battle. A man finds help for this inward battle in the whole grace-given life of the Church...



Against impure thoughts, use the spiritual sword: the name of [Jesus]. You must offer repentance to the Lord, and you must not hide anything from your spiritual father. Wounds that are exposed heal quickly.

St. Joseph the Hesychast (+1959)

Sanctify Our Space

While we sanctify time through our prayer, we also sanctify the space in which we exist. As we worship in a given space invoking the Holy Spirit to come and bless us, that space is also blessed; it becomes sacred, dedicated to holy things; it becomes a Holy Sanctuary.

The sacred symbols and signs, the holy icons and other liturgical items, dedicated exclusively for use in our worship, mark this space. As we enter an Orthodox church, we immediately know that this space is sacred. It is set apart for a holy purpose; the sanctification of our time and our life; the sanctification of our souls and our bodies.

Hence time is of the essence, and we need to make it holy. Our space is also of the essence, as it helps us sanctify our time. This is why our sanctuaries and the time we spend in them have to become central to our lives. The experience we bring away every time we enter our worship space is of the utmost importance, most especially for the children; the church experience becomes a powerful force that shapes their souls and defines the course of their lives. We need to make sure that no time is lost, that the souls of the young ones are being sanctified. We need to make sure through teaching and prayer that every minute spent in church is truly sanctifying time.

As for those of us who are older, we already know that we are running out of time on this earth, so we must make good use of our remaining time. As the new year shines upon us, offering us again the gift of time, let us make the right choices which will ensure the sanctification of our time on earth and open the doors into "Eternal Time" in the Kingdom of God. Time is of the Essence!

~ Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou, Marietta, GA

Metr. Hilarion (Alfayev) on Theology and Worship

Orthodox liturgical texts are important because of their ability to give exact criteria of theological truth, and one must always confirm theology using liturgical texts as a guideline, and not the other way round. The *lex credenda* (rule of faith) grows out of the *lex orandi* (rule of prayer, and dogmas are considered divinely revealed because they are born in the life of prayer and revealed to the Church through its divine services. Thus, if there are differences in the understanding of a dogma between a certain theological authority and liturgical texts, I would be inclined to give preference to the latter. And if a textbook of dogmatic theology contains views different from those found in liturgical texts, it is the textbook, not the liturgical texts, that need correction.

Doctrines and Behavior

St. John Chrysostom writes, "And, if we adhere to the true dogmas and are not concerned about our behavior, we will not have any kind of benefit; and in the same way, if we concern ourselves about our behavior and neglect true dogmas, we will receive no benefit for our salvation. If we want to be delivered from Gehenna and to gain the Kingdom, we need to be adorned on both sides: correctness of dogmas and honorable living."

Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee: The Triodion Begins Today

The Pharisees were an ancient and outstanding subgroup among the Jews known for their diligent observance of the outward matters of the Law. Although, according to the word of our Lord, they "did all their works to be seen of men" (Matt. 23:5), and were hypocrites (ibid. 23: 13, 14, 15, etc.), because of the apparent holiness of their lives they were thought by all to be righteous, and separate from others, which is what the name Pharisee means.

On the other hand, Publicans, collectors of the royal taxes, committed many injustices and extortions for filthy lucre's sake, and all held them to be sinners and unjust. It was therefore according to common opinion that the Lord Jesus in His Parable signified a virtuous person by a Pharisee, and a sinner by a Publican, to teach His disciples the harm of pride and the profit of humble-mindedness.

Since the chief weapon for virtue is humility, and the greatest hindrance to it is pride, the divine Fathers have set these three weeks before the Forty-day Fast as a preparation for the spiritual struggles of virtue. This present week they have called Harbinger, since it declares that the Fast is approaching; and they set humility as the foundation for all our spiritual labors by appointing that the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee be read today, even before the Fast begins, to teach, through the vaunting of the Pharisee, that the foul smoke of self-esteem and the stench of boasting drives away the Grace of the Spirit, strips a person of all his virtue, and casts him into the pits of Hades; and, through the repentance and contrite prayer of the Publican, that humility confers upon the sinner forgiveness of all his wicked deeds and raises him up to the greatest heights. All foods are allowed the fast-free week that follows this Sunday.

About Pride - *The Daughter of Stupidity* (from the Prologue of Ochrid)

"Pride goes before disaster, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

Of all that exists on the four corners of the earth, what, O mortal man, can make us proud except stupidities and demonic illusions. Did we not enter into the world naked and wretched and are we not going to depart this world in the same manner? Everything that we have, did we not borrow it; and by our death, are we not going to return everything? Oh, how many times has this been said and overheard? The wise Apostle says, "For we have brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it" (I Timothy 6:7). And, when we offer sacrifice to God of ordinary bread and wine, we say, "*Thine own of Thine own, we offer unto Thee*" (Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom). For nothing that we have in this world is ours: not even a crumb of bread nor a drop of wine; nothing that is not of God. In truth, pride is the daughter of stupidity, the daughter of a darkened mind, born of evil ties with the demons.

Pride is a broad window through which all of our merits and good works evaporate. Nothing makes us so empty before men and so unworthy before God as does pride. When the Lord is not proud, why should we be proud? Who has more reason to be proud than the Lord, Who created the world and Who sustains it by His power? And behold, He humbles himself as a servant, a servant to the whole world: a servant even to the death, to the death on the Cross!

O humble Lord, burn up within our hearts the devil's sowing of pride with the fire of Thy Holy Spirit, and plant within it the noble sowing of humility and meekness! ~ St. Nikolai of Serbia

Don't hesitate [to come to confession]. Don't be ashamed 'Whatever you may have done, even the greatest of sins, the spiritual father has power from the Lord Himself and from the Apostles, to forgive you with his stole.

Blessed Elder Iakovos of Evia (+1991)