

## The people of “the church”

The sense that the younger son has of the parable is that of a good Father who allows him to leave and who waits for him to return. As a son he departs and as a son he returns. That’s also why his repentance is valid, healthy. It is the repentance which we should all seek who are supposedly struggling in the Church.

Nevertheless, we are distinguished in our great majority by the pathology of the older son of the parable. It often happens that we see people who had anything other than a former honorable life, entering, having repented in the Church, beginning a spiritual struggle, confessing, partaking in the Eucharistic supper and in general living a life as Christ wants it, and we “eat them up” literally with criticism, reminding furthermore of certain familiar falls of theirs.

This occurs because with his sincere repentance our brother censures our own spurious lifestyle of false repentance and of seeming humility. Instead of us being taught by his true conversion, we envy like the older son of the parable and, in order for us to speak even more realistically remembering commentaries of the blessed professor of Missions Elias Voulgaraki on the Shorter Monastic Rules of Basil the Great, we react like someone who is living a deprivation syndrome and is jealous because he didn’t do the same things.

On the contrary, brethren, we ought to consider our brother’s personal harm, all that he went through, and to mourn also because he hurt so much, but also so that we don’t also undergo the same things if we don’t pay attention to the self sufficiency, the lofty train of thought and the pride which sometimes distinguish us.

Archim. E. T.

**SUNDAY February 16, 2014 Sunday of the Prodigal Son, Pamphilus the Martyr & his Companions, Flavianos, Patriarch of Constantinople, Romanos the Younger.**

**Tone First, Eothinon First, - Epistle St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 6:12-20, Gospel Luke 15:11-32**

**NEXT SUNDAY February 16, 2014 Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday), Polycarp the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna, Proterios, Archbishop of Alexandria, Gorgonia the Righteous, sister of Gregory the Theologian, Damian the New Martyr of Mount Athos. Epistle St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2, Gospel Matthew 25:31-46**



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## REPENTANCE AND RETURN

If suddenly the whole Holy Scripture would become lost and only the specific parable would remain, it would suffice for us to read it, repent and be saved, they say. It is considered so important. Which point however, beloved brethren exists, of the Gospel especially, which would not be equally important in our spiritual journey?

### Free in a distant land

That which we should pay attention to is that in the absurd demand of the younger son to ask for the portion of the paternal estate which “is due to him” and for him to leave, the Father doesn’t object. On the contrary he obeys. He does not seem to be disturbed by the fear of the unknown about what might happen to his child, nor does he send placed people to observe him and to bring him information, nor does he scare or forewarn him. He leaves him free to depart, simultaneously however the Father ascends onto the cross of awaiting.

The “distant land” is the place and way of sin. There, the young son squandered his estate, but also his “essence,” himself. The sure thing is that so long as the estate existed, the “friends” also existed near him.

When, however, everything was squandered, he remained alone. He found one of the citizens of that far away land, in the same way of life naturally, and he was grazing his pigs, eating the same food as them, dry carob

## **SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 15:11-32**

The Lord said this parable: "There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry. Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your

command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

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seeds. He obtained, in other words, a boss with analogous trains of thought, a man of passions ("pigs") who also is occupied with everything that fires up, "flares up" ("carobs", dry carob seeds) the passions.

## **The time of God and the paternal home**

In such a ruination of the world he makes a saving thought: in his paternal home, he says, the servants are living better than he. He will go and will tell his Father that he sinned before him and God. Let the Father use him as one of his workers. So he sets out to return, after the decision he made.

At his paternal home quite a bit before he reaches him, his father welcomes him and closes him in his embrace. He doesn't get to confess his falls and he leads him into his paternal home. He puts on the ring of trust, the sandals of repentance and the garments of purity and he welcomes him to a festive table.

The older son heard the noise from the party and learning the events envied the prodigal who had received mercy. He didn't want to go inside, despite his Father's supplications, he was speaking furthermore against his brother mentioning his deeds, although he had repented truly.

Envy is a fearful passion! Furthermore from someone who had never departed from the paternal home, but who in the end had not understood where he was living and with whom. Instead of rejoicing with the conversion of his brother, he was saddened, got frustrated, precisely like the Pharisees and those learned in the law when they would see a miracle, a benefaction of Christ, they would find many seemingly reasonable excuses in order for them to invalidate it, on account of the envy they were feeling for His person.