

to difficulties, to obstacles, trusting only in their judgment in their whatsoever abilities, simultaneously not trusting in the others. In this way however, they do not manage anything more, than to elevate the walls even more, which isolate them from God and people, and trap them in loneliness and despair.

Our age makes us end up self destructive. It guides just to believe only in our imperfect and weak self. It denies us the perspective of spiritual life and our dependence on God and His love. It traps us in the “here and now” loading us with problems difficult to solve, so that we may constantly be occupied with these, to lose the time of our life and to deprive us of referring to the source of life and the cause of our existence. In all these things, one is the salutary way of dealing with it. For us to kneel before the icons and, our full of compunction and repentance, publican prayer: “O God, be merciful to me the sinner”!

Archimandrite I. N

**SUNDAY, , FEBRUARY 21, 2016 SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE:**  
*Triodion Begins Today, Timothy the Righteous, John III, Patriarch of Constantinople, Eustathius, Bishop of Antioch, Zachariah, Patriarch of Jerusalem*

**TONE OF THE WEEK:** *Tone Five*

**EOTHINON** *Fifth Eothinon*

**EPISTLE:** St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 3:10-15

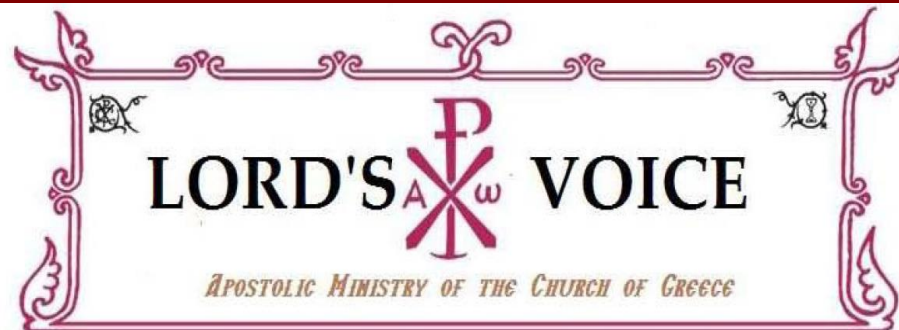
**GOSPEL:** Luke 18:10-14

**NEXT SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2016 SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON**

*Basil the Confessor, Kyranna the New Martyr of Thessaloniki, Jonah the Righteous Martyr of Lerios*

**EPISTLE:** St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 6:12-20

**GOSPEL:** Luke 15:11-32



**64<sup>TH</sup> YEAR FEBRUARY 21, 2016 PAMPHLET # 8 (3273)**

## THE IDOLIZING OF OUR OWN SELF

It is been stressed by many. In recent centuries, man, swayed by philosophical views, financial projections and social systems, has forgotten God and has been autonomized towards Him. Dizzy from promises of earthly prosperity and dedicated to pursuing material goods, he does not have the power, or the disposition, to lift his head from the mud of his earthiness, to gaze at the Heavenly Father. Furthermore, even when trapped in the constant variety of problems, he hears many people responsibly proclaiming that the crisis is not financial, but primarily moral and spiritual; he refuses in action, to transfer this admittance into actions which will cause spiritual resurrection and will overturn the chaotic journey towards heightened misfortune.

Furthermore, each one claiming his security, that which in Modern Greek it we call “taking care of ourselves”, he limits himself to his personal issues and is indifferent about society, the homeland, the neighbor... He considers that caring about himself is the sole duty, whereas he moves as if everything revolves around himself. In the end, the confirmation comes that our viewpoints and views are the only correct and true ones, and so the process of deification of our own self is completed, a process so

**SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE**  
**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE 18:10-14**

The Lord said this parable, "Two men went up into 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 like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up 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, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

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different and contrary to the way of deification by grace, to which Christ is inviting us!

**A period of prayer**

Today's gospel passage is familiar and well known. The parable of the Publican and the Pharisee denotes the beginning of the most spiritual period of the year, the period of our preparation for the greatest feast of our Church, of Pascha. And this period takes its name from the liturgical book of the Church which is called "Triodion", since the use of this book sets out from the Vespers of Sunday, when today's parable is read, and extends to the all night vigil of Holy Saturday, establishing this period as a period of increased prayer, both in quantity, as well as in quality.

While precisely because this period is the cause of more intense and more fervent prayer, for this reason, our Church begins the period with the teaching of Christ himself, about the manner of God-pleasing prayer. And this teaching is contained in

a story, in this most didactic parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, which has been analyzed so much, throughout the centuries and has ended up a cause for pondering and decisions.

Its main characteristic, is that in a simple manner it denotes the spiritual dangers which abolish prayer and alter it into an offense to Holy God, or even worse, into a sacrilege. Simultaneously the manner with which prayer reaches the throne of God is presented, in which it becomes God-pleasing and the praying person is engraced and proceeds on the path of Holiness and Theosis.

**"To himself he was praying"**

It's as Christ had in mind, the person of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when He describes the Pharisee 2000 years earlier! Without beating around the bush, and very clearly, Christ stresses that the Pharisee, even though he was inside the Temple, was not praying to God, but to himself, whom he had idolized. So for this reason also, his prayer is full of haughtiness and showing off. "I am perfect, the others are full of faults. I'm doing whatever is proper and even more, the others are deficient and are responsible for the evil in the world. I'm not making any mistake, I'm not ever wrong, the others are full of sins, they are always wrong, with their greatest mistake being that they're not hastening to accept me as their superior". Nowhere, the perspective of the Heavenly Kingdom, of eternity, nowhere the reference to the Father and the brethren, rather what prevails is the abolition of the Father and the putting down of the brothers, or even worse, what prevails is the accusation against the Father for the "wretchedness" of all the others, who in no case are considered brethren!

Man always prayed. The problem however, was to whom he was referring his prayer! And this problem is manifest mainly today, when most people refer to their own self and not at all to God. They're trying, on their own, to find solutions to problems,