



74th Year

February 1, 2026

Pamphlet #5 (3792)

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Luke 18:10-14)

Humility and justification

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."

ENTRY INTO THE PERIOD OF THE TRIODION

By the grace of God, we have entered the holy gates of the Triodion. It is an ecclesiastical season during which we struggle to strengthen our faith, our love, and our hope; to be re-catechized in piety; to pray and study the word of God more deeply; to forgive our brethren from the heart; and thus, be prepared to celebrate Holy Pascha.

The name Triodion comes from the hymnographic book of the same name, which from today until Holy Saturday is used in church services. It is called Triodion because many of the canons it contains have only three odes in the Orthros service, in contrast to other hymnographic books, such as the Parakletiki and the Menaia, which have the usual nine odes.

The human tendency toward self-justification

We enter the Triodion with the reading of the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. As the Evangelist Luke says, the Lord told this parable because some people were convinced of their own righteousness – believing themselves to be just, pleasing to God, virtuous – and as a result, they despised and looked down on others, whom they considered sinners.

Christ seeks to heal this spiritual illness of theirs by narrating a parable in which the trust of the Publican in God, the awareness of his own sinfulness, and his deep humble-mindedness are praised, in contrast to the proud mindset of the Pharisee, his boasting, his hypocrisy, and his self-justification, expressed through judging and despising the Publican.

The Pharisee's spiritual delusion

By justifying himself, and even at the very moment of prayer, did the Pharisee have any awareness that he was lying, first to himself and then to God? Is it possible for someone to claim to be sinless, that he is living out the word of God in all its infinite dimensions, or that he is acting in every way according to the divine will? A person who has grown accustomed to lying even to himself, forcing silence and forgetfulness upon his conscience, gradually reaches the point where he can no longer see any truth, neither within himself nor in others. And thus, he loses all respect for other people, but also all self-respect. Failing to value anyone, he stops loving, and then spiritual ruin follows: inner division, self-destruction, preoccupation with the lives of others, and continual condemnation of them.

The Apostle Paul puts things on the right foundation when he says, "Who makes you different?" In other words: Who made you superior to others, so that you judge and despise them? "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it from God, why do you boast as though you had not received it as a gift?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). In this way, the person of God, far from unhealthy complexes of inferiority or arrogance, recognizes the blessings God grants and acquires the corresponding character of love, gratitude, repentance, modesty, avoidance of falsehood, and of condemnation.

The ethos proposed by the Church

It is no exaggeration to say that the culture of our age easily accepts immoral behavior, arrogance, pride, and the tragic hypocrisy of the Pharisee. It is difficult for him to embrace the self-knowledge, humility, confession of sinfulness, and sincere repentance of the Publican, all of which illumine a person's life and lead him into true communion and relationship with God and with his fellow man. The Publican, like every person, had been trapped in his many sins and injustices. Yet he had not lost his trust and hope in God. This is why he prays, repents, and surely, like Zacchaeus, restores what he has wronged and now avoids the poison of sin, which can offer a person nothing of happiness, joy, peace, or fulfillment.

So with a spirit, therefore, of humble-mindedness, trust, and love toward God, let us also proclaim the exquisite hymn that characterizes today: "Let us flee the pride (arrogance) of the Pharisee, and learn the humility of the Publican, and with sighs cry out to the Savior: Be merciful to us, You who alone are easily reconciled."

Archimandrite N. K.

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1st Tone – Eothinon: 1 – Epistle: Romans 8:28-39
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