

St. Mary's Orthodox Church
217 First Street – Coaldale Pa 18218-1602
Phone.....570-645-2772
OUR WEBSITE...www.stmarysnativity.org

Rector: V. Rev. James Weremedic
Retired Attached: V. Rev Paul Ropitsky

Sunday, February 5, 2023
Choir Director: Wash King

34th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE

Glory Be to Jesus Christ! Glory Be Forever!

Services:

Sunday, February 5, 9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Fellowship Hour, PC Meeting (Publican & Pharisee)

Saturday, February 11, 4:00 PM – Great Vespers and Confessions

Sunday, February 12, 9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Parastas, and Spaghetti Dinner (Prodigal Son)

In memory of Jean (Haspe) Huffman offered by the Family

In memory of J. Ronald Devine offered by Fr. James & Mat. Lisa Weremedic

In memory of Mark Gunderson offered by Fr. James & Mat. Lisa Weremedic

Saturday, February 18, 4:00 PM – Great Vespers and Confessions

Sunday, February 19, 9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Fellowship, and Book Study (Meatfare/Last Judgment)

Saturday, February 25, 4:00 PM – Great Vespers and Confessions

Sunday, February 26, 9:30 PM – Divine Liturgy, Forgiveness Vespers and Fellowship

Sunday, March 5, 9:30 PM – Divine Liturgy, **Archbishop Mark Celebrating (Orthodoxy Sunday)**

Bring an Icon to Church for the procession.

We WELCOME all our visitors today! We want to let you know that we are so glad you came to pray with us. Please come again; join us after the Divine Liturgy in the Church Hall for Coffee Hour. If you do not have a home church, we invite you to become a part of our Church Family. Please Note: Only those Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves may approach the Chalice and receive Holy Communion.

Prayer List:

Fr. James Weremedic, Matushka Lisa Weremedic

Andrew Balliet, Michael Birosik, Clark Andrew Bogosh, Theodore Bogosh, Danielle Bogosh, Stephanie Chmel, Ilene Devine, Nadine Fegley, Julia Forte, Michael & Julia Harahus, Karen & Rose Harkins, Nancy King, Michael Kulick, Olga Kushnir, Anna Marie Mantey, Mildred O'Shura, Melissa Schmitt, Althea Shellock, Olga Sidoriak, Mary Simone, Martha Stafiniak, Martha Teno, Michael Teno, Joseph Tosca, Elizabeth Warcholak, Russell Wishousky, Russell Yallas, George Yurchak, & Marie Yurchak.

If anyone is in need of a priest, please call Father James Weremedic at 570-645-2772.
Visitation of the Sick and Infirm: If you are going into the hospital for any reason, please inform Fr. James at the Rectory. Emergency Calls: Please call the Rectory, 570-645-2772 anytime (day or night) in an emergency.

Candles (February 5)

7-day Vigils-Altar...For the Health of **Joanne Wisziveski** offered by Millie O'Shura
Altar Candles... In memory of **Mother, Mary Lutash** offered by Raymond & Mary Jo Danchak
Eternal Lamp... In memory of **Andrew & Mary Bybel Family** offered by Family Members
Vigil Crosses... In memory of **Aunt Olga Hebda** offered by Raymond & Mary Jo Danchak
7-day Vigils-Tetrapod... In memory of **Michael "Walter" Tucker** offered by Russell & Geri King
Decorated Candles/Tetrapod- In memory of **Andrew & Mary Bybel Family** offered by Family Members

February Birthdays: 1- Michael Kulick, 3- Michael Tatusko, 7- Ira James, 9- Wendy Kulick,
15- Claire Remington, 22- Peter Harahus, 26- George Yurchak (98)

Financials 1/29/23: Operating Acct: Candles \$62 Altar Candles \$30 Offerings \$1574
Non-Envelope \$150 Holy Days \$108 Donations \$ 1000

Please continue to keep filling your church envelopes. Thank you!

Fellowship Hour Hosts:

February 5 John Evetushick
February 12 Spaghetti & Meatball Dinner
February 19 Michael Tatusko
February 26 OPEN

There is a sign-up sheet for fellowship hour in the vestibule if you would like to host.

Spaghetti & Meatball Dinner is on February 12, 2023 @ 11:30 AM

See Marie Skripnek, Gloria Bench, or Helen King for Tickets. **Donation: \$12.00**

Several Memberships are available for Sam's Club.

Annual Fee is now \$45.00. See Helen King if interested.

If you have any Redner receipts, please call or get them to Helen King.

Please use your Boyer's card when shopping at Boyers; if you need one call Helen King.

St. Tikhon's Summer Camp.

Summer Camp will be held on July 1 – 8. Please see flyers in the hall and on the Diocesan Website, doepa.org. Volunteers are needed. Available positions are Counselors, Kitchen Crew, Nurse and Lifeguard. For more information, please contact Fr. Michael Shepherd at (570) 229-4829 or Info@StTikhonsCamp.org.

WE ALL HAVE DREAMS

Many thoughts and emotions rush over us as we walk through a cemetery. People are buried there that have come before us, all with unique life experiences. Some even leave behind testimonials to remember them by. Recently seen on a monument for a young person was this lovely phrase: **"PLEASE WATCH WHERE YOU STEP -- A DREAM LIES BURIED HERE."**

What a beautiful sentiment! Did you ever think of yourself as someone's dream? You are, you know. Before this world ever saw you, your parents dreamed of you. When you were a child, they had visions of your happiness and laughter; then as you grew, they dreamed of your future. They saw a vision of the life they hoped you would live.

Dreams are gifts from God. The Holy Bible mentions them countless times. St. Joseph saw an angel in his dream and Christ was born! St. Stephen saw a vision of Christ just before his death. Even the Church has dreams for you! She has a vision of you and your soul devoted to God. She places all Her trust and future in you. Our Lord expressed this in His prayer in Gethsemane that we would all love each other and that we would all be one.

So, when you are flush with anger . . . hold your tongue and don't speak harsh words. Remember, you may be stepping on someone's dream. Be loving and gentle with your OWN dreams while allowing the OTHER person the privilege of their dreams. The world would be a bleak place if men and women had not dared to dream. Imagine what would have been lost if we were not able to invent, discover, conquer and cure. After all, they all started as dreams! May we strive to exceed the dreams our Lord and our loved ones have envisioned for us.

A LESSON IN HUMILITY

*"Every one who exalts himself will be humbled,
but he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

St. Luke

With the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Orthodox Church begins a 3-week prelude to Great Lent. These 3 weeks are set forth as a time of preparation for the lenten season.

During this period, the worship services announce the coming period of fasting and penitence. The Church reminds us that we are approaching an important period of spiritual discipline and renewal. We are called to give serious attention to the sinful condition of our souls and to our need of spiritual purification and healing.

Sundays before Lent

The 4 Sundays of this period preceding Lent have a special character and meaning. They are designed to convey specific ideas which are closely related to the meaning of Lent. They are appointed to teach special lessons which illumine the true spiritual character of Christian life.

Each Sunday the Gospel reading tells a particular message which is essential to a successful Christian journey through Lent. A distinct emphasis is placed on specific requirements necessary for the true lenten spirit and work. In this way we are made aware of certain basic conditions of spiritual transformation and growth.

This preliminary period prepares us before we set out on our lenten pilgrimage. It reminds us of certain vital qualities needed for accomplishing the task of the lenten mission. And these reminders help us to enter Lent with the correct Christian attitude and spirit, with the proper spiritual understanding and disposition.

On the first Sunday, the Church brings our attention to the *Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee*. This parable is found in the Gospel according to St. Luke 8:9-14. Get out your Bible; read it, study it and learn from it. For it is a story that teaches us much about the sin of pride and the virtue of humility.

The Pharisee

The Pharisees were a sect or society of men within the Jewish religious community. Their very name, 'Pharisee', means 'separatist'. They were *separated* from everything ceremonially impure and legalistically wrong. They were a devout group, deeply rooted in Jewish religious law and life.

These 'holy men' were the religious authorities in Jewish society. They were the teachers of righteousness and piety, the advocates of God's will and holiness. They themselves were zealous observers of all religious law;

they fasted and tithed; they prayed regularly and fulfilled all ritual.

The people looked upon the Pharisees with honor and respect. They saw the Pharisees as a group of virtuous and pious men, men most pleasing to God. The Pharisees were considered pillars and examples of the Jewish religious life. Public opinion acknowledged them as men of the highest religious stature and dedication.

The Publican

The Publicans were Jews who served as *Tax Collectors*. The very word, 'Publican', means 'tax collector'. They were business men involved in collecting money for the Roman government.

In the times of Christ, the Jews lived under the provincial rule of the Romans. The Roman government exacted a heavy tax upon the people, and certain Jews accepted the responsibility of collecting this tax. It was a well paying job, but a job that alienated them from the rest of the Jews.

The tax collectors were very unpopular. They were despised because they served a heathen government and because some of them cheated for personal profit. The Jewish community did not accept the Publicans as fellow Jews but as heathen outcasts.

Both the Pharisees and the people looked upon the Publicans with repugnance and contempt. For they saw the Publicans as a group of men who were traitors and who

were burdening the Jewish livelihood. The Jewish Tax Collectors were classed with the harlots and most vile sinners. Public opinion considered them as most displeasing to God.

God's evaluation

By using a Pharisee who was regarded as righteous and a Tax Collector who was regarded as sinful, Christ tells a story that teaches us some very important lessons. He shows us that God's judgment is different than Man's. Man is not judged by external behavior alone or according to human estimates.

This does not mean that God condones sinful behavior or that He doesn't consider man's outward actions. God, no doubt, approved the good deeds of the Pharisee and disapproved the bad deeds of the Publican. God makes a clear distinction between good and evil, between right and wrong.

But through this parable, Christ wants to emphasize another point. He wants to lead us into a deeper understanding of man's spiritual nature and life. And so He directs our attention to the disposition of man's mind, heart and spirit. For it is here that we find the true foundation or basis of man's spiritual and religious life.

God looks at the inner spiritual attitudes, feelings and thoughts of man. He sees beyond the exterior of the human form. He penetrates the inner character and being. He observes the spiritual disposition

of man's inner faculties. For it is man's soul and person that is the source and agent of his activity and life. And it is the nature of this inner life together with its expression that determines the true quality of our religiousness and spirituality.

The inner life of the Pharisee and the Publican is clearly revealed during their prayers: The Pharisee praised himself and condemned others; he endeavored to tell God how good he was and to seek God's approval. The Publican condemned himself and didn't judge others; he sought only to acknowledge his own sin and to seek God's mercy.

In the inner life of the Pharisee, Christ sees hypocrisy and pride; He recognizes inner corruption and evil. In the inner life of the Publican, Christ sees honesty and humility; He recognizes an inner virtue and goodness.

Spiritual pride

We must not forget why our Lord spoke this parable: *"He told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others."* The actions of the Pharisee, such as fasting and prayer were good. But his spirit was proud and presumptuous. He assumed that he was really 'good and pleasing' in God's eyes. And he based this claim upon his own righteousness.

The Pharisee looked upon himself with self-satisfaction. Being a diligent observer of the

law, he had every right to think himself righteous. He was quite sure that all his diligent law-abiding activity made him outstanding and commendable to God. Only those who followed a life like his could be acceptable to God. Those who failed to live up to the letter of the law could only warrant contempt. He thought that his good actions made him a man of honor and merit before God. And he looked upon the Publican as an abomination in God's presence.

The message

The basic message of this parable is found summarized in these words: *"Every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."* We cannot exalt ourselves before God. We can be exalted only by God. We cannot claim any worth before God. For God alone can determine our worth. We can only humble ourselves before Him.

Whenever we elevate our own worth before God, we are being proud and pretentious. We are being proud because we are making a claim on the merits of our achievements and character. We are being presumptuous because we can never be worthy before God -- no matter how much we fast or how many good deeds we do. We can be acceptable to God only by approaching Him in a lowly and submissive disposition. We can be acceptable to God only when we confess our unworthiness and place our trust in His mercy.

Pride is an obstacle to God's grace; it separates us from His

fellowship. Humility is a help to God's grace; it leads us into communion with Him. As the Scriptures say, *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* Humility is a necessary quality for all spiritual growth. It is a quality which we must acquire, especially if we want to make some spiritual progress during the lenten season.

Meaning of Humility

The true quality of humility is found in the disposition of a person's mind, heart and soul. Humility is the recognition of our creaturely and lowly existence; it is the consciousness of our corrupt and sinful nature; it is the acceptance of our dependent and unworthy status in the presence of God and man.

We are creatures created on a lower level of being. Therefore, we are all dependent upon God for what we are and what we have. As St. Paul says: *"What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?"* (1 Corinthians 4)

Humility is the constant awareness *"that we live and move and have our being in God"* and that each and every person has a value and worth in the eyes of God, a value and worth determined by Him alone.

We cannot think that we are personally more pleasing or more acceptable to God than someone else. No matter how great our

talents or how noble our achievements, we do not have the right to lay any claims before God. Christ tells us as much when He says, *"So, you also, when you have done all that is commanded of you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'."* (St. Luke 17)

In God's eyes we are all sinners; we stand before Him as unworthy servants. If we judge ourselves according to God's ideal and the teaching of Christ, we won't have any trouble recognizing our own sinfulness. But we must honestly and humbly search our hearts. And coming to the Sacrament of Confession, we must confess our own sins and not the sins of others.

We must always come before God with lowly and penitent hearts, imitating the contrition and the humility of the 'tax collector'. Only with the approach and attitude of the Publican can we be acceptable to God and receive His mercy. Without this humble spirit, our fasting and other lenten endeavors will be in vain.

"O believers, let us avoid the boastful tone of the proud Pharisee. And with reverence, let us emulate the humble prayer of the Publican. Let us not be exalted in our own proud thoughts, but let us humble ourselves in our own unworthiness. And with contrition, let us cry out, 'God be merciful to us and forgive us our sins'." (From the Matins)

G.T.

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE Tone 1. Afterfeast of the Meeting. Repose of St. Theodosius of Chernígov. Beginning of the Lenten Triodion. Holy Martyr Agatha of Palermo in Sicily (251). Martyr Theodula of Anazarbus in Cilicia, and with her Martyrs Helladius, Macarius and Evagrius (ca. 304). Icon of the Mother of God "Seeker of the Perishing".

2 Timothy 3:10-15 (Epistle)

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra – what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 13:17-21 (Epistle, Saint)

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Luke 18:10-14 (Gospel)

"Two men went up to 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 as this tax collector.

I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise 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, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 6:17-23 (Gospel, Saint)













And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.

Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2023

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 5th	 TRIODION WEEKS Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 12th	 The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 19th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare FEBRUARY 26th FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! FORGIVENESS SUNDAY Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 5th	 GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 12th	 ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 19th	 VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS HALF WAY TO PASCHA! Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 26th	 ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 2nd	 ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 9th GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 GREAT AND HOLY WEEK ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 14th	 GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 16th NO FASTING!	 BRIGHT WEEK HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!