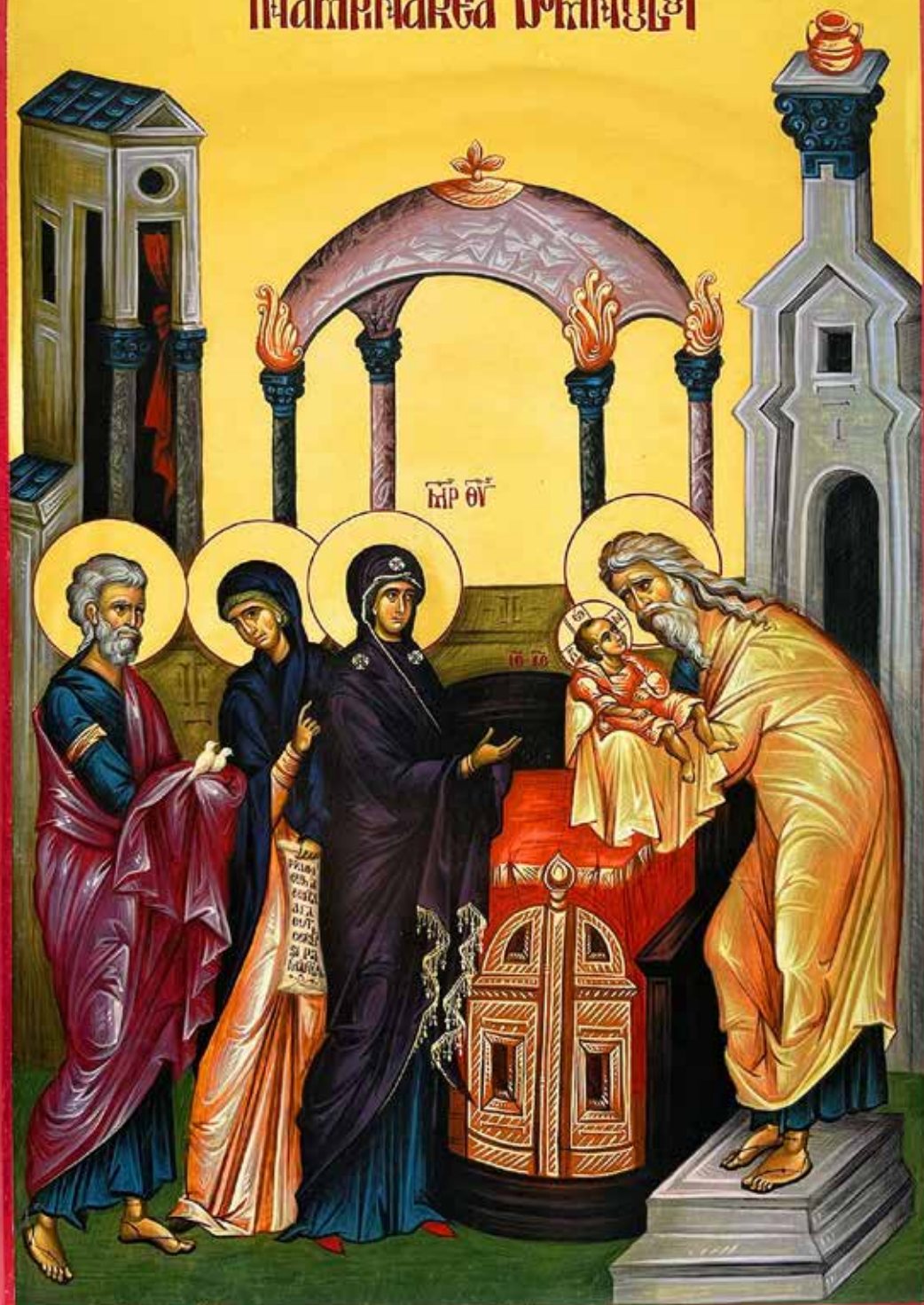
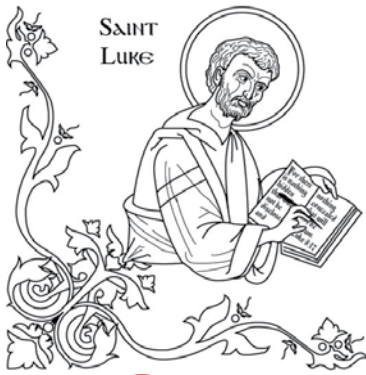


ἸΝΤΑΜΠΗΑΡΕΑ ΔΟΚΙΜΟΥΣΙ





ST. LUKE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Diocese of the South, Orthodox Church in America

1415 Woodstock Ave., Anniston, AL 36207

The Very Rev. Archbishop Father Basil Henry

(256) 235-3893 • basilncana@yahoo.com

<https://stlukeanniston.org>

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **We welcome our visitors.** Please join us for a potluck meal after Liturgy so you can get to know us. Communion is for Orthodox Christians who have fasted before Liturgy but everyone is welcome to the blessed bread an Altar Server will offer.
- Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, health, salvation, and furtherance in all good things to all Thy servants who are celebrating birthdays, namesdays and anniversaries, and preserve them for **MANY YEARS!**
- Today's feast is also known as **Candlemas**. Today, after Liturgy, Father will bless candles for both the church and parishioners.

This Week's Fasting, Services and Scripture Readings						
Mon., 2/3	Tues., 2/4	Wed., 2/5	Thurs., 2/6	Fri., 2/7	Sat., 2/8	Sun., 2/9
						Divine Liturgy 10 a.m.
					Great Vespers 4 p.m.	Brunch & Fellowship
1 Peter 2:21-3:9	1 Peter 3:10-22	1 Peter 4:1-11	1 Peter 4:12-5:5	2 Peter 1:1-10	2 Tim. 2:11-19	2 Tim. 3:10-15
Mark 12:13-17	Mark 12:18-27	Mark 12:28-37	Mark 12:38-44	Mark 13:1-8	Luke 18:2-8	Luke 18:10-14
Service times are subject to change. Please check with Fr. Basil if in any doubt.						



Saint Luke Orthodox Church
Orthodox Church of America

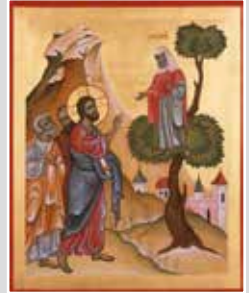
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SAINTS OF THE DAY

Sun., Feb. 2nd, 2025 • Meeting of Christ • Zachæus Sunday

Martyr Agathadorus of Tyana in Cappadocia; Saint Apronian, a Roman executioner who converted to Orthodoxy when taking the martyr St Sisinnius before the tribunal and was then himself martyred (c. 304); Saint Flosculus, Bishop of Orleans in France (c. 480); Saint Adalbert I of Ostrevent (652); Saint



Zachæus Sunday

Feock, in Cornwall; Saint Adeloga, a daughter of Charles Martel, Abbess in Germany (c. 745); Saint Burchard, Bishop of Wurzburg (754); Saint Marquard, Bishop of Hildesheim, Saint Theodoric, Bishop of Minden, and the Martyrs of Ebsdorf, (880); Saint Columbanus, born in Ireland, he lived as a hermit near the church of Saint-Bavo in Ghent in Belgium (959); New Martyr Jordan of Trebizond, at Constantinople (1650); New Hieromartyr Gabriel, Hierodeacon, of Constantinople (1676); Venerable Anthimos of Chios (1960); Venerable Ekvtime (Kereselidze) the Confessor, of Georgia (1944); Repose of Schema-monk Seraphim of Valaam Monastery (1860); Synaxis of the Icon of the Theotokos the Hypapante of Kalamata, patron saint of Kalamata; Synaxis of the Icon of the Theotokos “Apekoi” (Ypakoe), at the Church of the Hypapante on Kalymnos; Synaxis of the Icon of the Theotokos “Dreadful Bee”, at Leivadi on Kythira; Synaxis of the Icon of the Theotokos of Goumenissa; Synaxis of the Icon of the Theotokos “Flevariotissa’ or ‘Libya’”, at Mesaria on the island of Astypalaia; Synaxis of the Icon of the Theotokos “Flevariotissa”, at Ampelakia on Salamis Island; Synaxis of the Icon of the Theotokos “Chrysalinotissa”, in Leukosia, Cyprus.

Divine Liturgy

of St. John Chrysostom

Troparia/Kontakia

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 7)

By Thy Cross Thou didst destroy death.
To the thief Thou didst open Paradise.
For the Myrrhbearers Thou didst change weeping into joy,
and Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God,
to proclaim that Thou art risen, //
granting the world great mercy.

*(If you are following in the green
Divine Liturgy service book, these
hymns are referenced on page 5.)*

Troparion for the Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple (Tone 1)

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of Grace!
From you shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,
enlightening those who sat in darkness.
Rejoice and be glad, O righteous Elder,
you accepted in your arms the Redeemer of our souls, //
Who grants us the Resurrection!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

Kontakion of the Resurrection (Tone 7)

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive,
for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers.
Hell is bound, while the Prophets rejoice and cry:
“The Savior has come to those in faith; //
enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!”

Both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion for the Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple (Tone 1)

By Thy Nativity Thou didst sanctify the Virgin's womb
and blessed Simeon's hands, O Christ God.
Now Thou hast come and saved us through love.
Grant peace to all Orthodox Christians, //
O only Lover of Man!



Scripture Readings

Prokeimenon

(for Sunday)

Tone 7

The Lord shall give strength to His people. / The Lord shall bless His people with peace.

V. Offer to the Lord, O you sons of God! Offer young rams to the Lord!

Tone 3

(*Song of the Theotokos*)

V. My soul doth magnify the Lord, / and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

The Epistle Reading

1 Timothy 4:9-15

(*for the Resurrection*)

My son Timothy, the saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you. Practice these duties, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress.

Hebrews 7:7-17

(*for the Feast*)

Brethren, it is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. Here tithes are received by mortal men; there, by one whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

Alleluia

Tone 7

(for Sunday)

V. It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy Name, O Most High.

V. To declare Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth by night.

Tone 8

(*for the Feast*)

V. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen

(If you are following in the green Divine Liturgy service book, these verses are referenced on page 6.)

(If you are following in the green Divine Liturgy service book, these readings are referenced on page 7.)

Thy salvation!

The Gospel Reading

Luke 19:1-10

(for the Resurrection)

At that time, Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchæus; he was a chief collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchæus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” And Zacchæus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Luke 2:22-40

(for the Feast)

At that time, the parents brought the child Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.” Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Symeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

“Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; and Symeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

(If you are following in the green Divine Liturgy service book, these readings are referenced on page 8.)

Theotokion

(for the Meeting, Instead of "It is truly meet," we sing:)

O Virgin Theotokos, hope of all Christians,
protect, preserve, and save those who hope in you!

In the shadow and letter of the Law,
Let us the faithful discern a figure:
every male child that opens the womb is holy to God.

Therefore we magnify the first-born Word of a Father who has no beginning, //
the Son first-born to a Mother who had not known man.

Zacchæus Sunday

Luke 19:1-10

From *The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke*
by Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

1-10. And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, who was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was, and could not for the crowd, because he was of little stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down: for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham.

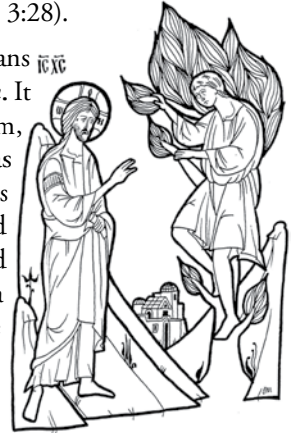
For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. The Lord seizes the mightiest of the devil's vessels and destroys his cities. See how the Lord not only makes publicans His disciples, but He even takes prisoner—in order to save him—the chief of publicans, Zacchæus. No one doubts that a publican is an abomination: how much more so is the chief publican, who is foremost in wickedness? For the publicans derived their living from no other source than the tears of the poor. But even this chief publican is not despised by the Lord. In return only for showing eagerness to see Jesus he receives salvation. He desired to see Jesus, which is why he climbed up into the sycamore tree, but before he had caught sight of Jesus, the Lord had already seen him. In the same manner, the Lord always anticipates us if only He sees that we are willing and eager. When the Lord sees Zacchæus, He urges him to come down quickly, for He intends to stay at his house. And Zacchæus was not slow to obey—when Christ commands anything, we must not hesitate—but he *came down and received Him joyfully*, even though many people murmured.

Let us see how Zacchæus reaped the benefit of Christ's entrance into his house. He says, *The half of my goods I give to the poor*. Do you see his fervor? He began to disburse without stint, not giving just a little, but all that he had. Even what he held back, he held back so that he could give to those whom he had wronged. From this we learn that there is no benefit at all to a man who gives alms to others of money he has obtained unrighteously and ignores those whom he defrauded in obtaining that money. See what Zacchæus does with this money: if he

(If you are following in the green Divine Liturgy service book, this hymn is referenced on page 17.)

defrauded anyone he restores to him fourfold, thus remedying the harm he had done to each man he defrauded. This is true almsgiving. He not only remedies the harm, but he does so with increase. This is in accordance with the law, which commanded that that the thief make fourfold restitution (Ex. 22:1). If we consider well, we see that nothing at all remained of Zacchæus' money. Half he gave to the poor, and of the half that remained to him, he gave fourfold to those whom he had wronged. But since the living of the chief publican was derived from fraud and extortion, and since he paid back fourfold all that he had wrongly taken, it follows that he stripped himself of everything he had. From this we see that his thinking goes beyond the prescription of the law, for he had become a disciple of the Gospel, and he loved his neighbor more than himself. And what he promised to do, he did: he did not say, "I shall give half, and I shall restore fourfold," but instead, *Behold, I give and I restore*. For he had heard the counsel of Solomon, *Say not, Come back another time, tomorrow I will give* (Prov. 3:28).

Christ proclaims to him the good tidings of his salvation. By *this house* He means ¹⁵²⁶ Zacchæus, for the Lord would not call a building without a soul *a son of Abraham*. It is clear that that the Lord named this living master of the house a son of Abraham, because Zacchæus was like the patriarch in two respects: he believed and was counted righteous by faith, and with money he was magnanimous and generous to the poor. See that the Lord says that Zacchæus is now a son of Abraham, and that in his present behavior the Lord sees the likeness to Abraham. The Lord did not say that Zacchæus had always been a son of Abraham, but that he is now a son of Abraham. Before, when he was a chief publican and a tax collector, he bore no resemblance to that righteous man, and was not his son. To silence those who were complaining that the Lord went to be the guest of a sinful man, He says, *The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*.



This is the explanation of the literal words; but it is easy to understand these things in another sense as well, for moral benefit. Anyone who is chief among many in wickedness is little in spiritual stature, for flesh and spirit are opposites to one another, and for this reason he cannot see Jesus *for the crowd*. Crowded in by a multitude of passions and worldly affairs, he is not able to see Jesus acting, moving and walking about. Such a man as this cannot recognize Christian acts for what they are—Christ acting and moving in us. But such a man, who never sees Jesus passing by and cannot perceive Christ in Christian acts, will sometimes change from negligence and come to his senses. Then he will climb up to the top of the sycamore-fig, passing by every pleasure and sweetness, as signified by the figs, and counting them as foolish and dead. Becoming higher than he was and making *ascents in his heart* (Ps. 83:6), he is seen by Jesus and can see Jesus, and the Lord says to him, *Make haste, and come down*, which means, "Through repentance you have ascended to a higher life; come down now through humility lest pride and high mindedness make you fall. Make haste, and humble yourself. If you humble yourself, I must abide at your house, for it is necessary that I abide in the house of a humble man. *Upon whom shall I look, if not upon him who is humble and meek, who trembles at My words?* (Is. 66:2)

Such a man gives half of his goods to the destitute demons. For our substance is twofold: flesh and spirit. The righteous man imparts all his fleshly substance to the truly poor, the demons who are destitute of everything good. But he does not let go of his spiritual substance, for as the Lord likewise said to the devil concerning Job, *Behold, I give into thine hand all that he has, but touch not his soul* (Job 1:12). And if he has taken any thing from any man by false accusation, he restores it to him fourfold. This suggests that if a man repents and follows a path that is opposite to his former way of wickedness, he heals his former sins through the four virtues (courage, prudence, righteousness, and self-control), and thus receives salvation and is called *a son of Abraham*. Like Abraham, he also goes out of his land and out of his kinship with his ¹⁵²⁷former wickedness and out of the house of his father (Gen.

12:1), meaning, he comes out from his old self and rejects his former condition. He himself was the house of his father, the devil. Therefore, when he went out of *the house of his father*, that is, when he went out of himself and changed, he found salvation, as did Abraham.

Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

by Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas (†2011) founder of the Diocese of the South

On February 2nd the Church celebrates the great feast of **The Meeting of our Lord in the Temple**. The Gospel lesson for that day relates how the mother of Jesus brought Him to the temple, as was the custom and requirement under the God-given Law of Moses, of Israel (Exodus 13:2, 12; Leviticus 12:2-8). When the righteous Simeon, who received Christ in his arms at the temple, saw the child he knew immediately that this was the Redeemer promised by all of Israel's prophecies, for the elder was inspired by the Holy Spirit (Luke 2:26-27).

Being inspired he himself uttered prophetic words which form the hymn sung or chanted at the end of every Vespers service: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of Thy people, a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

This particular feast is part of the great celebration that began forty days prior, with the Nativity of Christ (December 25). Eight days later (January 1) we remembered the Circumcision of Christ and then His Baptism (January 6). The commemoration of these events in our Lord's earthly life basically form one feast, the feast of the Incarnation of God the Word.

God literally entered the world, into time and history. He was physically present in the midst of His people, His creatures whom He loves. Our Lord took on human nature in order to reconcile unto Himself, man who had strayed far from the Source of his life.

In taking on the "form of a servant" God, at the same time, in the Person of Christ, fulfilled every requirement of the Law that He Himself had given to His people through Moses. He demonstrated, thereby, that everything that had happened in Israel's history could not be described merely as a succession of unrelated events. Rather this was a history with a definite goal: the salvation of mankind. He identified Himself as the Director of that history and fulfilled its expectation.

When the righteous Simeon took the child into His arms and declared that this indeed was Salvation Incarnate, the "Light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of Israel," a new era began; the era of God's presence among His children.

To this day, all of the Church's celebrations, no matter what the event commemorated may be, whether in the life of Christ, of the Theotokos, or of the saints, all are celebrations of Christ and the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of His presence. He initiated this Kingdom and promised its ultimate realization. And now, just as the Old Israel had awaited the beginning of God's Kingdom, the New Israel (the Church) awaits the Second and Glorious Coming of Christ and the fullness of His Kingdom, revealed.

Although all of our celebrations are intimately rooted in the knowledge that we have been called for complete

communion with Christ and to live in function of His Kingdom to which we already belong, we still live in a world that has for the most part rejected what Christ gave it, that is, authentic life “in abundance,” life with real purpose and meaning. We Christians, in spite of having accepted what God’s intervention in human affairs gave us, slip repeatedly and fall into the great temptation to convert the things of this world into gods. We are constantly attracted by ways of seeking happiness and fulfillment that exclude God. This, of course, always proves to be vain and futile.

So our lives vacillate, back and forth, between the assurance of salvation and indifference, between moments of real joy because we know that God is with us, and moments of boredom because we cannot give ourselves totally over to Him.

Every Christian celebration reaches its climax in the Divine Liturgy for the feast. In this sacred work, when God’s people assemble in His name, we actually become participants in the Heavenly Kingdom to come. We are as literally present with Christ in His future Kingdom as the Apostles were with Him at the Last Supper. So the Kingdom is initiated among us and we enjoy it before our time, by anticipation. This is what every Eucharist is; this is what our feasts and celebrations are all about, and that is why the Eucharist is the very center of all of them.

I will emphasize again, however, that although what we have said is true, we continually orient our lives towards everyday pursuits, often living as though we had never experienced this divine reality. That is why repentance and penitential seasons are in order. That is why in approximately one month we will enter the Great Fast or Lent during which time we are exhorted to repent of our sins.

Basically what is important for us Christians is that we have really “seen the True Light, received the Heavenly Spirit, found the true faith” in this experience of the Kingdom of God. The question we must all ask ourselves sincerely, however, is “what are we like when we return into this world after this Heavenly experience?”

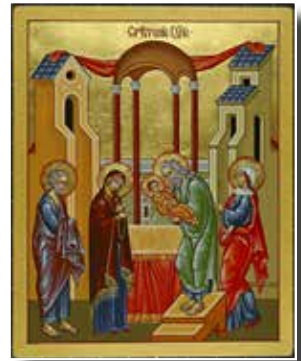
To Christ Who willed to be held in the arms of the righteous Simeon for our salvation be glory, honor and worship, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Example of Zacchaeus: on Overcoming Vanity

by Hieromonk Ambrose (Alexy) Young

Brothers and Sisters, because of the Gospel reading appointed for the Liturgy this morning, today is called, in the Orthodox lectionary, the Sunday of Zacchaeus. Each year this is actually an “early warning signal”—for the Sunday that follows it is the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, and that is the first of the preparatory Sundays that will lead us into the Holy Season the Great Fast, Lent.

The Apostle Zacchaeus was a rich publican, or tax collector, at Jericho. Since he was short of stature, he climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Christ passing by. He became a disciple of the Lord and after the Lord’s Ascension into Heaven, and he accompanied St. Peter on his missionary travels, eventually becoming the first bishop of Caesarea in Palestine. So, he was an Apostle of the Seventy. His Feast Day is April 20, the



day of his holy death.

By paying attention this morning to the Gospel account concerning Zacchaeus, we learn that our own Lenten journey must begin with an increased awareness of our own sinfulness and unworthiness, just as St. Zacchaeus, before the Lord, recognized his own sins, promising to make restitution by giving half of his wealth to the poor and by paying to those he had falsely accused four times as much as they had lost. In this, he actually went beyond the requirements of the Law.

The late Metropolitan Anthony Bloom of London, in a sermon he preached about the Sunday of Zacchaeus, had a very different and interesting “take” on this Gospel.



“Today’s Gospel is about vanity and about the way in which it can be overcome, indeed about the condition and the cost of it. Zacchaeus was a rich man, a man, known in his town, a man whom everyone would recognize; he was a man of unrighteous ways, and yet something stirred within him when he heard of Christ and he wanted to see Him. It probably was to a certain extent the desire to see the New Prophet of Israel, but this would not have been enough to prompt him to do what he did. In the crowd, because he was too small of stature, he climbs into a tree; sure, he was surrounded with laughter, with mockery and yet, he so wanted to see Christ, it mattered so much to him to see Him, that he was prepared to be mocked, laughed at rather than let Him pass by. And in all this crowd through which Christ was passing, Christ saw only one man: Zacchaeus, and He called him down, and He went to stay with him.”

Metropolitan Anthony continues--and this is very important for us to pay close attention to--:

“Vanity is that condition of our soul, that miserable condition of our soul, in which we are afraid of human judgment, in which we derive our sense of worth from the judgment of those who surround us, and indeed it is vanity, because the things for which we are praised are vain, empty, unworthy of the greatness of man. And also, for praise we do not turn to those people capable of a sound and at times severe judgment; we turn to the people who are ready to offer us the praises which we want. This makes these praises doubly vain, its substance is naught, because the fact is that the people from whom we receive it are also empty, in our own eyes, unless they speak well of us, aren’t they?

“Thus, St John Climacus says that vanity is the attitude of one who is afraid of men and is arrogant before the face of God, who thinks God’s judgment matters little, provided that he has the approval of those who surround him.”

You know, this is a remarkably clear and fresh explanation of vanity, and it is drawn from the Gospel of the sinful publican, Zacchaeus, who never minded the laughter and mocking of the crowd around him as he climbed the tree in order to see the Lord. Normally we think of vanity as being concerned about how we look, how we dress, etc.—and this is, in fact, vanity, too, of course. But here this good bishop has just given us a richer and deeper understanding of the sin or vice of vanity, and this lesson is well worth remembering, especially when we are examining our consciences at night and in preparation for the Sacrament of Confession, because the fact is that we often forget that what is needed is the esteem and good judgment of God, not the esteem of other people—and not even our own self-esteem, either! Zacchaeus--this really quite wretched Scrooge—showed us that we must forget about the good opinions of others who

may praise us and seek, rather, to see and know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Metropolitan Anthony continues:

“St John Climacus says to us that the way to get rid of vanity is humility... The way of humility is that of bowing before the judgment of God. If we are incapable of soaring Godwards, lie before Him like the parched earth is before the face of the sky, abandoned, helpless, thirsty, hungry, longing, desperate not to be able to achieve what we wish to achieve, this is the beginning of humility.”

But perhaps that’s too much, too dramatic for us, because we aren’t used to trusting God and abandoning ourselves to His providence and care. In that case, we can just offer ourselves, our weakness, frailties and all, to Him each morning and each evening, and thank Him for everything He has done, is doing, and will do for us—and in that way we can start to whittle away at our vanity.

Then, instead of patting ourselves on the back because others like us or think well of us, or because we think well of ourselves, we can be quietly, humbly grateful and be astonished at the goodness God bestows on us, rather than the fact that others might praise us. This makes it possible to be humble in an anonymous way, which is of much greater value in the eyes of God than letting others know what a fine job we are doing. And perhaps, too, we can begin to see that others also are quietly humble and not seeking rewards in this life by means of pats on the back or praise. Is this not the example we see constantly, over and over and over again in the lives of the saints? I remember Fr. Seraphim of Platina, a spiritual son of St. John Maximovitch of San Francisco, saying that he had never known a man who was so serenely indifferent to the opinions of others about him [as was Archbishop John Maximovitch]! This is humility; this is the death of vanity; this is “keeping our eyes on the prize” instead of on ourselves or the opinions of others about us.

And all of this, brothers and sisters, is in this morning’s quiet and special example of the publican, Zacchaeus, who actively sought Christ, kept His eyes on Him, and welcomed Him to his home, regardless of what others thought.

Because of this, Zacchaeus achieved salvation; he received the Kingdom of Heaven. He found the “one thing needful.” Brothers and sisters, let us go and do likewise!

<https://www.christthesavioroca.org/zacchaeus>



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