

PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED FOR ...

The health and salvation of—

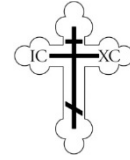
Metropolitan Onufriy + Ukrainian Orthodox Church	William Vivian
Metropolitan Isaiah Archbishop Benjamin	Valerie Deanna
Bishop Neofitos of Eldoret	Thomas
Archpriests Matthew & George	James
Hieroschemamonk Ambrose	Matthew
Subdeacon James	Keith
Reader Aleksei	Michael
Matushka Naomi	Rose
Jonathan • Phoebe • Anne	Abi
Iraida • Longinus • Nina	Gregory
Amal • Nicula • Maximus	John
Dmitry • Natalia	Keith • Diane
Danil • Anna • Kenneth Venetia	Robert Skyler Crystal Michael
Catechumens Rebecca, Isaac, Anna, Adalie, Everett, Ivey, Emily, David, Gregory, Christian, Michael, Lucy, Corey, Bryan, Damon, Samuel	

The repose and salvation of—

Archbishop Anastasios (1/25)
Laura Christine (1/18)

Please let Father know if there are any names you would like added to the list.

*A mission parish under the omophorion of His Eminence Benjamin,
Archbishop of San Francisco and the Diocese of the West,
Orthodox Church in America*



ST TIKHON ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



Sunday, February 16, 2025

**Sunday of the Prodigal Son
St. Nikolai, Archbishop of Japan**



Courtesy: artpictures.club

Sundays at 9:05 AM – Hours + Divine Liturgy
This Saturday, Feb. 22, 5:30 PM – Great Vespers + Confession

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Prodigal Son

How simple and how restrained are the words in which the Gospel describes his cruel rejection of his father, and prepares his departure into the far, the strange country! “Father - give me my part of thy inheritance!” Do these words not mean: “Father - I can't wait until your death! You are still strong, and I am young; it is now that I want to reap the fruits of thy life, of thy labours; later they will be stale. Let us come to an agreement: for me you are dead; give me what belongs to me or what would belong to me after your actual death, and I will go, and I will live the life I have chosen”.

This is what really the young man meant; but isn't it very much the way we treat God and His gifts. From Him, as long as we are with Him, we are in possession of all things, but we feel constrained by His presence, we feel limited by the inevitable rules of His household: He expects from us integrity and truth? He expects from us to learn from Him what it means to love with all one's mind, all one's heart, all one's strength, all one's being, - and that is too much for us. And we take all His gifts, and we turn away from Him to use these gifts so that they can profit us, and us alone, without any returns either to God, or to anyone else.

And then, the young man leaves; he leaves for an alien country, a country which is not God's own, a country which has rejected God, renounced God, which has been betrayed into the power of His adversary, a country where there is no place for Him. And he lives according to the rules of this country and to the desires of his heart. And then, hunger comes.

Now, we turn away, carrying with us the gifts of God; and we live in a country which is also alien; we live in a world which is man-made, but not God-made; or rather: made by God, and distorted by man. What kind of hunger comes to us? We are rich, we are safe, we have everything which God gave us, and continues to give - only we don't realise that God continues to give while we squander. But what is the hunger that can come to us? The awareness which Christ describes in the first Beatitude: Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the Kingdom of God... Who are the poor of spirit? The poor of spirit are those who have understood, and understand day in, day out, all their life through that they have no existence except that God loved us into existence; we have no life except God's life poured into us, His breath, the breath of life. And then we are so rich, because God has revealed Himself to us: He has revealed Who He is; we can love Him, know Him, worship Him, serve Him, emulate Him indeed because He has become man and has shown us what a man can be. And He has given us all that our intelligence, a heart, a will, a body, the world around us, the people around us, the relationships that are ours - all these are God's, because we cannot make them, we can force no one to love us, and yet, we have friends and people who love us. We cannot be sure of our mind: in one moment a stroke can extinguish the greatest mind; there are moments when we want to respond to a need, to a suffering - and our heart is of stone; only God can give it life! We waver between good and evil - only God can steady our will; and so forth.

If we only realise this, then we understand that we are totally destitute: we are nothing, we have nothing, and yet, so rich we are; because destitute, we are endowed with all the gifts of God; having betrayed Him time and again, turned away from Him time and again, we still are loved of Him: indeed - “blessed are the hungry: they shall be filled”! If we only realise our hunger for the real things, then it will come our way. But not simply because

we are hungry; they will come our way at a moment when totally poor, we are loved: and this is the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of love: God loves us. And He has granted the gift of love to each of us. The young man felt hungry. He felt hungry for his father's home, and yet he knew that he had no right anymore to call himself a son to him: he was a murderer! He had told him: Die before your time that I may live according to my will... And yet he goes, because he still can call the man whom he rejected 'Father'.

And what happens then? The father sees him coming from afar off; he does not wait in dignity for him to fall at his feet and confess his sins. He rushes towards him, he embraces him! And the young man makes his confession: I am no longer worthy to be called thy son - but at that moment the father stops him: you may not be worthy of being my son, and yet, you are my son, and you can not become a hireling in you[r] father's house...

That is what this parable tells us; that is what we must reflect on: where do we stand to this first simple, cruel, murderous words of the young man? And are we aware of our dereliction? Are we hungry enough to realise that we must go home to the Only One who loves us, and Who, seeing us fallen, still claims from us the greatness of sonship...

Let us reflect on this. It's one more step towards the day when in repentance we will come to make our confession, receive forgiveness. And if we were honest in our repentance, determined in our turning Godwards, we will be at home and ready to enter into Holy week together with Christ the Son, together with the Father Who gives His Son, together with the Mother of God Who accepts the death upon the cross of Her Son, that we may be saved. Amen.

From a homily given on 3 February, 1991, by Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh

Troparion – Tone 8 (Resurrection)

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, /
While the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, /
Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, / Granting life to the world. /
The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: /
“Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ! / Glory to Thy Kingdom! ///
Glory to Thy dispensation, O Lover of mankind!”

Kontakion – Tone 3 (Triodion)

Foolishly have I run away from Thy glory, O Father, /
Wasting in sin the wealth that Thou gavest me. /
Therefore with the words of the Prodigal I cry unto Thee: /
I have sinned before Thee, compassionate Father. ///
Accept me in repentance and make me as one of Thy hired servants.

Epistle: I Corinthians 6:12-20 (Sunday) **Gospel:** Luke 15:11-32 (Sunday)

Also this week: Greatmartyr Theodore the Recruit (February 17); St Leo the Great, Pope of Rome (February 18); Apostles of the Seventy Archippus & Philemon, and Martyr Apphia (February 19); St Leo, Bishop of Catania in Sicily (February 20); Ven. Timothy of Symbola in Bithynia (February 21); Uncovering Relics of the Holy Martyrs at the Gate of Eugenius at Constantinople (February 22).

*** regular fasting this week ***