



*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,  
 a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

*Fr. Nikolay Khalimonov, Priest-in-Charge, 323-851-7989, nkhalimonov@yahoo.com  
 Fr. Alexy Karlgut, Dean/Administrator, 607-759-1833*

*Please join us for prayer and fellowship.*

**Upcoming Services:**  
**Saturday, February 4, 11**  
**Great Vespers: 5pm**

**Sunday, February 5, 12**  
**Divine Liturgy: 10am**

**Coffee and fellowship will  
 follow the service**

*The above services are at St.  
 Olympia Church  
 34 North Main Street  
 Norwood, NY, 13668*

*Mailing Address  
 St.Olympia Orthodox Church  
 PO Box 122 Canton, NY13617*

**Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee  
 February 5**

*Let us flee from the pride of the Pharisee!  
 And learn humility from the Publican's tears!  
 Let us cry to our Savior,  
 have mercy on us, only merciful One!  
 Kontakion*



**Greatmartyr Theodore Stratelates "the General"  
 February 8**

*Truly enlisted with the King of Heaven,  
 you became an outstanding general for Him,  
 passion-bearer Theodore;  
 you armed yourself wisely with the weapons of faith  
 and conquered hordes of demons,  
 revealing yourself as a victorious athlete.  
 Therefore, in faith we always call you blessed.  
 Troparion*

## **Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee**

**February 5**

The Sunday after the Sunday of Zacchaeus is devoted to the Publican and the Pharisee. At Vespers the night before, the *Triodion* (the liturgical book used in the services of Great Lent) begins.

Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee who scrupulously observed the requirements of religion: he prayed, fasted, and contributed money to the Temple. These are very good things, and should be imitated by anyone who loves God. We who may not fulfill these requirements as well as the Pharisee did should not feel entitled to criticize him for being faithful. His sin was in looking down on the Publican and feeling justified because of his external religious observances.

The second man was a Publican, a tax-collector who was despised by the people. He, however, displayed humility, and this humility justified him before God (Luke 18:14).

The lesson to be learned is that we possess neither the Pharisee's religious piety, nor the Publican's repentance, through which we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ's teaching, asking Him to be merciful to us, deliver us from sin, and to lead us on the path of salvation.

Two weeks before the beginning of the Fast, as part of our preparation for Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha, the Church prescribes the reading of Saint Mark's Gospel. From Monday to Friday the focus is on the end times, and the Savior's death and burial.

## **Greatmartyr Theodore Stratelates "the General"**

**February 8**

The Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates came from the city of Euchaita in Asia Minor. He was endowed with many talents, and was handsome in appearance. For his charity God enlightened him with the knowledge of Christian truth. The bravery of the saintly soldier was revealed after he, with the help of God, killed a giant serpent living on a precipice in the outskirts of Euchaita. The serpent had devoured many people and animals, terrorizing the countryside. Saint Theodore armed himself with a sword and vanquished it, glorifying the name of Christ among the people.

For his bravery Saint Theodore was appointed military commander [stratelatos] in the city of Heraclea, where he combined his military service with preaching the Gospel among the pagans subject to him. His gift of persuasion, reinforced by his personal example of Christian life, turned many from their false gods. Soon, nearly all of Heraclea had accepted Christianity.

During this time the emperor Licinius (311-324) began a fierce persecution against Christians. In an effort to stamp out the new faith, he persecuted the enlightened adherents of Christianity, who were perceived as a threat to paganism. Among these was Saint Theodore. Licinius tried to force Saint Theodore to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. The saint invited Licinius to come to him with his idols so both of them could offer sacrifice before the people.

Blinded by his hatred for Christianity, Licinius trusted the words of the saint, but he was disappointed. Saint Theodore smashed the gold and silver statues into pieces, which he then distributed to the poor. Thus he demonstrated the vain faith in soulless idols, and also displayed Christian charity.

Saint Theodore was arrested and subjected to fierce and refined torture. He was dragged on the ground, beaten with iron rods, had his body pierced with sharp spikes, was burned with fire, and his eyes were plucked out. Finally, he was crucified. Varus, the servant of Saint Theodore, barely had the strength to write down the incredible torments of his master.

God, however, in His great mercy, willed that the death of Saint Theodore should be as fruitful for those near him as his life was. An angel healed the saint's wounded body and took him down from the cross. In the morning, the imperial soldiers found him alive and unharmed. Seeing with their own eyes the infinite might of the Christian God, they were baptized not far from the place of the unsuccessful execution.

Thus Saint Theodore became "like a day of splendor" for those pagans dwelling in the darkness of idolatry, and he enlightened their souls "with the bright rays of his suffering." Unwilling to escape martyrdom for Christ, Saint Theodore voluntarily surrendered himself to Licinius, and discouraged the Christians from rising up against the torturer, saying, "Beloved, halt! My Lord Jesus Christ, hanging upon the Cross, restrained the angels and did not permit them to take revenge on the race of man."

Going to execution, the holy martyr opened up the prison doors with just a word and freed the prisoners from their bonds. People who touched his robe were healed instantly from sicknesses, and freed from demonic possession. By order of the emperor, Saint Theodore was beheaded by the sword. Before his death he told Varus, "Do not fail to record the day of my death, and bury my body in Euchaita." He also asked to be remembered each year on this date. Then he bent his neck beneath the sword, and received the crown of martyrdom which he had sought. This occurred on February 8, 319, on a Saturday, at the third hour of the day.

Saint Theodore is regarded as the patron saint of soldiers. He is also commemorated on June 8



## Sunday of the Prodigal Son

February 12

*I have recklessly forgotten Your glory, O Father;  
and among sinners I have scattered the riches  
which You had given me.*

*Therefore, I cry to You like the Prodigal:  
"I have sinned before You, O compassionate Father;  
receive me a penitent and make me as one of Your hired servants."*

Kontakion

The Sunday after the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. This parable of God's forgiveness calls us to "come to ourselves" as did the prodigal son, to see ourselves as being "in a far country" far from the Father's house, and to make the journey of return to God. We are given every assurance by the Master that our heavenly Father will receive us with joy and gladness. We must only "arise and go," confessing our self-inflicted and sinful separation from that "home" where we truly belong (Luke 15:11-24).

After the Polyeleion at Matins, we first hear the lenten hymn "By the Waters of Babylon." It will be sung for the next two Sundays before Lent begins, and it serves to reinforce the theme of exile in today's Gospel.

Starting tomorrow, the weekday readings summarize the events of Holy Week. On Monday we read Saint Mark's account of the Entry into Jerusalem. On Tuesday we read how Judas went to the chief priests and offered to betray the Lord. On the night before His death Christ tells His disciples that one of them will betray Him. He also predicts that they will desert Him, and that Peter will deny Him three times. On Wednesday the Gospel describes how Judas betrayed the Savior with a kiss. Thursday's Gospel tells how Jesus was questioned by Pilate. On Friday we read the narrative of Christ's crucifixion and death.

### UPCOMING DIOCESAN EVENTS

#### **Diocesan Council Meeting**

Thursday, February 23 at 11:00 AM

Diocesan Chancery, Bronxville NY

#### **ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL'S NEXT VISIT TO OUR PARISH – WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29 FOR PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY**

#### **WEEKDAY VESPERS AT THE HERMITAGE OF ST OLYMPIA**

Weekdays at 4 PM

For information please contact Mother Sophronia at [mothersophronia@gmail.com](mailto:mothersophronia@gmail.com)

or via Facebook: Nun Sophronia Hofstead