



SAINT OLYMPIA ORTHODOX CHURCH

34 N MAIN STREET
NORWOOD, NEW YORK

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY



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

Fr. Gregory Fedorchak, Parish Rector 607-427-3286, father.fedorchak@gmail.com

Upcoming Services:

February 15, Saturday

10am – Divine Liturgy (St. Olga’s Mission, 127
Beekman Street, Plattsburgh, NY)

5pm – Great Vespers

February 16, Sunday

10am (9:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

February 20, Thursday

9am – Divine Liturgy (St. John the Soldier
Mission, 129 N Rutland St, Watertown, NY)

February 22, Saturday

9am – Divine Liturgy **Memorial Saturday**

5pm – Great Vespers

February 23, Sunday **Meatfare**

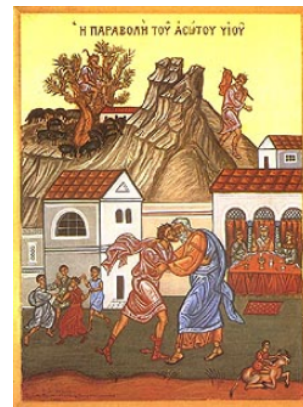
10am (9:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

There will also be **daily weekday
vespers at 5PM** at the Hermitage.

Please stay after Liturgy on Sunday for coffee,
food, and fellowship. Bring your friends and
family!

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

February 16



*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



Appearance of Christ to Saint Martin of Tours

February 13

*As a devoted man of God, you proclaimed His
mysteries, and as a seer of the Trinity, you shed
your blessings on the Occident. By your prayers
and entreaties, O adornment of Tours and glory
of all the Church, preserve us, O Saint Martin,
and save all who praise your memory.*

Kontakion

The Prodigal Son: Re-Centering Until Our Last Breath

By Fr. Steven Kostoff

Reflections in Christ, February 22, 2019

“God requires of us to go on repenting until our last breath” [Saint Isaias the Solitary].

“Repentance.... It means not self-pity or remorse, but conversion, the re-centering of our whole life upon the Trinity ... It is to see, not what we have failed to be, but what by divine grace we can now become; and it is to act upon what we see” [Metropolitan Kallistos Ware].

I believe that we should think of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son extending itself throughout the week, thus giving us the Week of the Prodigal Son and the possibility of meditating upon this extraordinary parable carefully and thoughtfully. This parable is perhaps “the parable of parables,” and thus deserving of a great deal of attention on our part. Sundays come and go perhaps too rapidly and we find ourselves back in our “routines,” living in a world far different than the one we are given a glimpse into through the Liturgy. That fleeting glimpse, which is actually a vision of life that is Christ-centered and Spirit-guided, may thus appear to be “ideal,” but not “real.” However, it may actually be the vision of the one underlying reality of all that exists and which makes everything else not only tolerable or endurable, but meaningful and embraceable. If our liturgical and eucharistic experience is forgotten the moment it is over, as we move on to Sunday’s entertainment, and then prepare to endure Monday morning’s responsibilities, perhaps then we are “cheating” ourselves of “the one thing needful.” And in the process we lose sight of the riches of the Gospel if we only absentmindedly await next Sunday’s. That certainly applies to the Parable of the Prodigal Son!

Yet, before briefly looking into some of the riches of this well-known parable, perhaps we should place it within the wider context of its setting in the Gospel According to Saint Luke. For the Evangelist Luke places the Parable of the Prodigal Son as the climax of a series of three parables in chapter 15 that reveal the “joy in heaven” when sinners are “found,” following an implied or clearly stated repentance. In fact, these parables are told to a group of “tax collectors and sinners” who “were drawing near to hear Him” [Luke 15:1]. The first of these is the Parable of the Lost Sheep [Luke 15:3-7]: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

The Parable of the Lost Coin [Luke 15:8-10] follows immediately: “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

These are wonderful parables that serve as images of our heavenly Father rejoicing when He “finds” a sinner who has returned to Him through repentance. This “rejoicing” links together these two shorter parables with the masterpiece to come that closes out this trilogy of repentance-oriented parables. For the father of the parable will command his household to “make merry” with the return of his wayward son [Luke 15:24, 32]. Repentance is not simply a time of hand-wringing, regret and guilt. It is the beginning of a new life and an open-ended future that is a radical change in direction from the “no exit” of sin and alienation from God. The somber and stultifying atmosphere of sin is driven away by the “breath” of the Spirit, which “blows where it wills.” Of course, repentance is hard work—for old habits die hard—but sustained by the grace of God and the promise of salvation, the entire process to this day is most perfectly described by Saint John of the Ladder as “joy-creating sorrow.” Remorse for the past devoid of forgiveness will only produce sorrow—if not despair. The acceptance of divine forgiveness produces joy—both for God and the sinner. A profound awareness of God’s gift of salvation as the only meaningful release from the sorrow of sin led to the “gift of tears” of the saints. Their weeping was the expression of an inner joy that was overwhelming.

If (or As?) we squander our “inheritance” from our heavenly Father, we resemble that representative figure of the prodigal son. We too, then, “journey into a far country” there to waste our wealth in “loose living” [Luke 15:13]. Unlike the prodigal son, though, we can do this without moving a step away from our homes. We need only retreat into the seemingly limitless space of our imaginations where fantasies entice us with unattainable visions of “self-realization” or “pleasure.” Then, there are the murky recesses of our hearts; uncharted territory that if not filled with the grace of God will “fill up” with “inner demons” that will eventually frighten us by the sheer audacity of temptations we never thought ourselves capable of entertaining. Or, perhaps a bit less dramatically, there are “the pods that the swine ate” [Luke 15:16],

symbolic of philosophies and worldviews totally foreign to the Christ-centered life of the Church. The end result will be an emptiness and desolation that will exhaust our own inner resources. Our humbled minds and bodies will begin to search elsewhere for more satisfying nourishment. Anyone in such a predicament will only hope to be blessed—as was true of the prodigal son—with that mysterious process that leads to repentance, described simply as “he came to himself” [Luke 15:17]. Then, in words that have an urgency far greater than in an entire book of theology, we too may cry out, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants” [Luke 15:18-19].

We all know what follows: the compassionate father who runs to embrace his son in love; the clothing of the son in festal garments; the orders and preparations for a sumptuous banquet of joy; and the solemn words, “for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” [Luke 15:24]. As this parable repeats itself endlessly until the end of time, with its finely etched descriptions of sin, repentance and redemption, we continue to witness some of the “mini-resurrections” that make up the meaningful dramas of everyday life.



**Hieromartyr Haralambos,
Bishop of Magnesia in Thessaly
February 10**



**Righteous Theodora,
wife of Emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast
February 11**

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Holy Empress Theodora was the wife of the Byzantine emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast (829-842), but she did not share in the heresy of her husband and secretly venerated the holy icons. After the death of her husband, Saint Theodora governed the realm because her son Michael was a minor.

She convened a Council, at which the Iconoclasts were anathematized, and the veneration of icons was reinstated. Saint Theodora established the annual celebration of this event, the Triumph of Orthodoxy, on the first Sunday of the Great Fast. Saint Theodora did much for Holy Church and fostered a firm devotion to Orthodoxy in her son Michael.

When Michael came of age, she was retired from governing and spent eight years in the monastery of Saint Euphrosynē, where she devoted herself to ascetic struggles, and reading books that nourished her soul.

A copy of the Gospels, copied in her own hand, is known to exist. She died peacefully around the year 867.

In 1460, her relics were given by the Turks to the people of Kerkyra (Corfu).

As a most worthy namesake of the gifts bestowed by God, and a divinely-wrought image of holy wisdom and faith, you make the Church shine with godly piety; for you demonstrate to all that the Saints in every age have shown honor to the revered icons, O Theodora, thou righteous and fair adornment of Orthodox Empresses.

**Troparion
(The name Theodora means “the gift of God.”)**

**Hieromartyr Haralambos, Bishop of Magnesia in Thessaly,
the Martyrs Porphyrius and Baptus, and three women Martyrs
February 10**

The Hieromartyr Haralampus, Bishop of Magnesia, the martyrs Porphyrius and Baptus and three women martyrs suffered in the year 202.

Saint Haralampus, Bishop of Magnesia (Asia Minor), successfully spread faith in Christ the Savior, guiding people on the way to salvation. News of his preaching reached Lucian, the governor of the district, and the military commander Lucius. The saint was arrested and brought to trial, where he confessed his faith in Christ and refused to offer sacrifice to idols. Despite the bishop's advanced age (he was 113 years old), he was subjected to monstrous tortures. They lacerated his body with iron hooks, and scraped all the skin from his body. During this the saint turned to his tormentors, "I thank you, brethren, that you have restored my spirit, which longs to pass over to a new and everlasting life!" Seeing the Elder's endurance and his complete lack of malice, two soldiers (Porphyrius and Baptus) openly confessed Christ, for which they were immediately beheaded with a sword. Three women who were watching the sufferings of Saint Haralampus also began to glorify Christ, and were quickly martyred.

The enraged Lucius seized the instruments of torture and began to torture the holy martyr, but suddenly his forearms were cut off as if by a sword. The governor then spat in the face of the saint, and immediately his head was turned around so that he faced backwards. Then Lucius entreated the saint to show mercy on him, and both torturers were healed through the prayers of Saint Haralampus. During this a multitude of witnesses came to believe in Christ. Among them also was Lucius, who fell at the feet of the holy bishop, asking to be baptized.

Lucian reported these events to the emperor Septimus Severus (193-211), who was then at Pisidian Antioch (western Asia Minor). The emperor ordered Saint Haralampus to be brought to him in Antioch. Soldiers twisted the saint's beard into a rope, wound it around his neck, and used it to drag him along. They also drove an iron nail into his body. The emperor then ordered them to torture the bishop more intensely, and they began to burn him with fire, a little at a time. But God protected the saint, and he remained unharmed.

Many miracles were worked through his prayer: he raised a dead youth, and healed a man tormented by devils for thirty-five years, so that many people began to believe in Christ the Savior. Even Galina, the daughter of the emperor, began to believe in Christ, and twice smashed the idols in a pagan temple. On the orders of the emperor they beat the saint about the mouth with stones. They also wanted to set his beard on fire, but the flames burned the torturer.

Full of wickedness, Septimus Severus and an official named Crispus hurled blasphemy at the Lord, mockingly summoning Him to come down to the earth, and boasting of their own power and might. The Lord sent an earthquake, and great fear fell upon all, the impious ones were both suspended in mid-air held by invisible bonds, and only by the prayer of the saint were they put down. The dazed emperor was shaken in his former impiety, but again quickly fell into error and gave orders to torture the saint.

And finally, the emperor sentenced Saint Haralampus to beheading with a sword. During Saint Haralampus' final prayer, the heavens opened and the saint saw the Savior and a multitude of angels. The holy martyr asked Him to grant that the place where his relics would repose would never suffer famine or disease. He also begged that there would be peace, prosperity, and an abundance of fruit, grain, and wine in that place, and that the souls of these people would be saved. The Lord promised to fulfill his request and ascended to heaven, and the soul of the hieromartyr Haralampus followed after Him. By the mercy of God, the saint died before he could be executed. Galina buried the martyr's body with great honor.

In Greek hagiography and iconography Saint Haralampus is regarded as a priest, while Russian sources seem to regard him as a bishop.

You became a firm column in the Church of Christ, wise Haralampus; a lamp of everlasting light to the world: Well known to the world through your martyrdom, you dispelled the dark night of idolatry. Boldly intercede with Christ God that He may save our souls.

Troparion

Your holy martyrs O Lord, through their sufferings have received incorruptible crowns from You, our God. For having Your strength, they laid low their adversaries, and shattered the powerless boldness of demons. Through their intercessions, save our souls!

Troparion

Appearance of Christ to Saint Martin of Tours

February 13

On February 13, the Russian Orthodox Church commemorates the appearance of Christ to Saint Martin of Tours (October 12 and November 11). From childhood, Saint Martin was known for his compassionate heart and great pity for the poor. When he was twenty-two years old, even before he was baptized, he began to give away all his possessions to those in need, and soon he was left with just one set of clothes and a knife.

Saint Martin, like many young men, had to serve in the army for several years. One day, when the weather was very harsh and unusually cold, he met a man at the city gates of Amiens, almost naked, and begging for alms. Martin saw that people just walked past the man without taking any notice. Since Martin had already given away everything he owned, he had only his cloak and his uniform. No one else would help the beggar, so Martin felt that it was his responsibility to do something for him.

Recalling the Savior's words: "If anyone wishes to judge you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak as well" (Matthew 5:40), Martin drew his sword and cut his cloak in two. Giving half to the beggar, he wrapped himself in the other half. Seeing him in the torn cloak, those standing by began to laugh at his strange appearance. Others, who had more sense, regretted the fact that they had done nothing for the man, although they could have clothed the beggar without uncovering themselves as Saint Martin did.

That night, in his sleep, Martin saw Christ wearing half of his cloak, which he had given the beggar. The Lord told him to look at Him and to notice that it was the same garment. Then the Savior said to the Angels who surrounded Him, "Martin is still just a catechumen, but he has clothed me in this garment."

Saint Martin did not become puffed up with pride because of this vision. Instead, he saw this as a sign of God's goodness, which confirmed Christ's words: "Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40).

Because Saint Martin gave alms throughout his life, he was rewarded with the gift of working miracles. Let us follow his example so that we might be granted a small corner of Paradise.

In signs and in miracles you were renowned throughout Gaul. By grace and adoption you are a light for the world, O Martin, blessed of God. Almsgiving and compassion filled your life with their splendors, teaching and wise counsel were your riches and treasures, which you dispense freely to those who honor you.

Troparion



Final Total for 2024 Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors (DDB) Contributions

With profound gratitude, we are pleased to announce that the final total for the 2024 DDB contributions has reached an incredible \$252,167!

This remarkable achievement is a testament to the generosity, faith, and love of our dedicated donors, whose support continues to strengthen the life and ministries of our Diocese. Through your kindness and commitment, you have made a lasting impact, ensuring that our parishes, clergy, seminarians, and vital outreach programs can continue to flourish.

On behalf of the entire Diocese, THANK YOU for your unwavering support and dedication to Christ's Church. May the Lord bless you abundantly for your love and generosity!

With love and prayers,
+Archbishop Michael

UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

Work Days

We will have two demolition/cleaning sessions starting at 4:00 PM on Wednesday, February 12, and 3:30 PM on Friday, February 14. Please join if you can!

House Blessings

Fr. Gregory wants to come bless your house! Find the digital sign-up sheet [here](#). Traditionally, house blessings are completed before the beginning of Lent, which is quickly approaching.

Parish Council Meeting

Tuesday, February 18, 7:30 PM @ the Hermitage.

CS Lewis Book Study

Thursday, February 20, 5:45 PM to 7:15 PM @ the church. This session we will discuss CS Lewis' "The Great Divorce." The next gathering will be March 13th. Contact Joseph Stark if you are interested.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAFETY – please use caution or avoid using the side entrance that leads into the side narthex. It is icy and near many large icicles.

Coffee Hour – Sign up [here](#) or on the list at Church.

Commemoration Lists – Submit names of Living and Departed to be commemorated at the Divine Liturgy. Lists can be found near the candles.

Special Services by request – If you would like Liturgy to be celebrated on a certain day, or would like to pray a particular Akathist, etc., please let Father know!

PARISH NEEDS

- **Shoveling and Trash Removal** – please consider volunteering for shoveling or trash removal for a weekend. Sign up [here](#).

Brothers, our purpose is to know the power of God's goodness.

For when the Prodigal Son abandoned his sin, he hastened to the refuge of his father.

That good man embraced him and welcomed him;

he killed the fatted calf and celebrated with heavenly joy.

Let us learn from this example

to offer thanks to the Father, Who loves all men,

and to the glorious Victim, the Savior of our souls!

Vespers, Lord I Call

Like the Prodigal Son, I too have returned

after spending my whole life away from home.

I have scattered the wealth that You gave me, O merciful Father.

Accept me as I repent, O God, and have mercy on me!

Vespers, Litya