



SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America
305 Main Road, Herkimer, New York, 13350 • 315-866-3272
Archpriest John Udics, Rector • e-mail: john.udics@gmail.com
Deacon Demetrios Richards • e-mail: dwr00nhr@twcny.rr.com
Parish Web Page: www.cnyorthodoxchurch.org

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to God for All Things!

February 16, 2014	Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Saint Nikolai, Archbishop of Japan	Liturgy	9:30 am
February 22	Saturday	Great Vespers	4:00 pm
February 23	Sunday of Meatfare. Sunday of the Last Judgment	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am

The Bulletin for January 5 was offered for the health of Olga Prawlocki, donated by Sonia Buttino.

The Bulletin for January 12 was offered in memory of Stephen Sobolowski, donated by Cindy Sobolowski.

Saints of the Day: Saint Nikolai, Archbishop of Tokyo, Apostle to Japan (+1912). Martyrs Presbyter Pamphilus, Deacon Valens, Paul, Seleucus, Porphyrius, Julian, Theodulus, Elias, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Samuel, and Daniel, at Caesarea in Palestine (307-309). Saint Macarius, Metropolitan of Moscow, Apostle to the Altai (1926). New Hieromartyrs Priests Elias Chetverukhin (1934) of Moscow and Peter Lagov (1931). New Hieromartyr Priest Paul (1938). Venerable Maruthas, Bishop of Sophene and Martyropolis, and others with him in Mesopotamia (422). Saint Flavian, Archbishop of Antioch (381-404). New Monk-martyr Romanus of Carpenision, who suffered at Constantinople (1694). Saint Mary the New of Byzia in Thrace (9 c.). Saint. Basil Gryaznov of Pavlovo-Posadsky (1869).

Please remember in your prayers: Abducted nuns and orphans of Saint Tekla Monastery in Syria, Suffering Christians of Egypt, Syria and the Middle East and Ukraine. Bishop Boulos Yazigi, Bishop Yohanna Ibrahim, of Aleppo. Archimandrites Athanasy, Isidore, Nectarios, Pachomy. Archpriests Jason, John, Vincent. Priests Bohdan, Sergius, Jacobus, Andrij, Vasil, Vasil, Leonid. Deacons Mark, Demetrios, Philip. Mother Raphaela, Dimitri, Nina, Daniel, Catherine, Helen, Anna, Peter, Helen, Michael, Stephanie, Zara, Nolan, Emelie, Connie, Michael, Ed, Nettie, Maria, Michael, John, James, Nancy, Susan, Daniel, Aaron, Mark, Jennifer, Nina, Nadine, Michael, Anna, Gregory, Marianna, Mykola, Helen, Isaiah, Albert, Kevin, Robert, Robert, Andrew, David, Warren, Vincent, Archpriest Leonid, Diane, Abigail.

God Grant Many Years! Prayers for the health of William and Helen Homyk were offered today at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Deacon Demetrios and Matushka Anastasia Richards.

God Grant Many Years! Prayers for the health of Archpriest Vincent Saverino, Jun Iijima, Faith Gilmartin and Protodeacon Keith Russin were offered today at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Vladimir Zaporozhets Nun Liudmilla, Dr Georges Augustin Barrois and Archpriest John Meyendorff were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today requested by Father John Udics.

Memory Eternal. Prayers for the repose of Julia Bruska, Owen Dulak and Anna Kuzenech were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of the "Memory Eternal Requiem Service Fund."

PRODIGAL SON

by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

1991

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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.

We all, without any exception but in different degrees obey the cruel, deceitful question of satan to Christ in the wilderness! You have the power to do it - make these stones to become bread; You are God's child - use what God has given you of wisdom, of strength, use it for you own benefit! Why waste your time until you are too old?.. Isn't it an image of our own behaviour?

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 your father's house... He claims from his, as God claims from us that we should be aware, and grow to the level of our human greatness: the children of the Living God called to be partakers of the divine nature, His sons and daughters in Christ and in the Spirit.

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

* All texts are copyright: Estate of Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

Syria nuns taken from Maaloula in new video: Al-Jazeera - February 09, 2014

DOHA: A group of nuns from the historic Christian-majority town of Maalula in Syria appeared in a new video broadcast by the Qatar-based satellite news channel Al-Jazeera on Sunday.

The women are reportedly 12 nuns from a Greek Orthodox convent of Mar Takla in Maalula who were taken by gunmen in early December. Al-Jazeera said the video it broadcast on Sunday was recorded on February 5.

They appeared in the recording without audio, but a commentator said "they say they are in good health, haven't been mistreated... and they are waiting for their release to return to the convent".

The report gave no indication of where the nuns were being held, but said that they were "Syrian and Lebanese" and had been "kidnapped".

On December 6, the station broadcast a short video of the nuns in which they denied they had been kidnapped. They were reported missing from the town north of Damascus after rebel forces, including jihadists, seized control of Maalula in early December.

Religious officials said 12 nuns and three maids had gone missing from the convent, although one of the nuns in the video said they were 13 nuns and 3 "civilians".

Media close to the Syrian regime had accused rebels of using the nuns as human shields, and fears were expressed for their safety.

In the latest footage, the nuns "thank all those who are seeking to obtain their release and call for the release of all prisoners", Al-Jazeera reported them as saying. It said "the kidnappers are demanding the release of women held in Syrian prisons to set the nuns free", without elaborating.

Maalula, a picturesque village cut into the cliffs some 55 kilometres (35 miles) from Damascus, has long been a symbol of the ancient Christian presence in Syria.

Its residents are some of the few left in the world who speak Aramaic, the language Jesus Christ is believed to have spoken.

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Feb-09/246852-syria-nuns-taken-from-maaloula-in-new-video-al-jazeera.ashx#ixzz2t1J4M3cO>

(The Daily Star :: Lebanon News :: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/>)