

Thursday, February 2, 2017

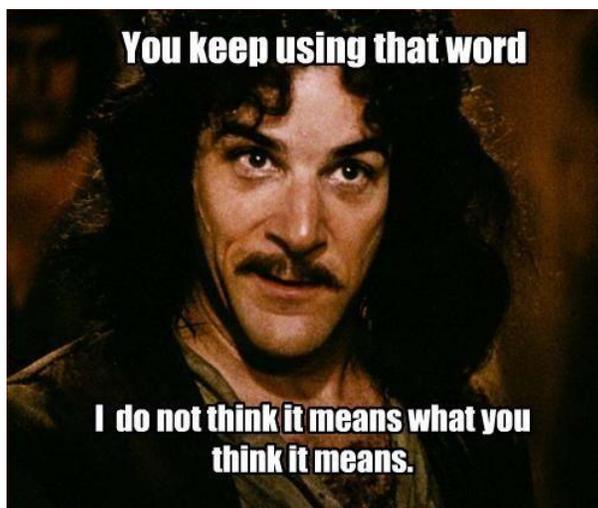
*St. Basil Church members exist to BE Disciples,
MAKE Disciples, and GROW Disciples of Jesus Christ.*

When Preparation Meets Opportunity

by Fr Allan Boyd

There's an old joke that goes: One day, a young man walking the streets of New York, found himself lost. He stopped an older gentleman, who looked like he knew his way around, to ask for directions. "Excuse me sir," the young man inquired, "can you please tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?" The old man looked at him with a wink & a smile and replied, "Practice! Practice! Practice!" Now, while that may not have been the answer the young man was looking for...it certainly speaks to the meaning of this upcoming season for us.

Years ago, I had a friend who dreamed of someday becoming a famous **writer**. He would delight himself with stories of what life would be like for him in the future, as a wealthy, award-winning, author of novels that made the list of New York Times Bestsellers. After a while though, I realized that there was a fatal flaw in his fantasy scenario of becoming a famous author. He never wrote. He took no opportunities to practice. He knew that his writing was abysmal...and he couldn't bear to look upon his own shoddy work. He couldn't stomach the thought that before there can be any success, there has to be a lot of failure. He wanted the life of a celebrity novelist without having to write the thousands of ineffective practice lines that are part of the maturation process. He loved the idea of being a writer...but he hated writing. He didn't want to prepare.



Sometimes I wonder how many of us are like my old friend regarding Orthodox Christianity. We imagine ourselves as being Orthodox (right-worshipping) Christians. We delight ourselves with thoughts of what it will be like for us someday, when we bask in an eternally intimate relationship with God. But we dislike the spiritual disciplines that the Church offers us for developing that relationship with Him. Some can't bear the thought of waking up early on Sunday morning to attend Orthos at 8:30 AM...or even showing up on time for the beginning of Divine Liturgy at 9:30 AM. Perhaps we fondly envisage a fantasy scenario of ourselves as having this very close relationship with God...just so long as we don't have to actually spend too much time with Him...on His terms. GK Chesterton wrote, "*Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and therefore left untried.*"

The Church knows our struggle with this kind of unrealistic, adolescent, and harmful, imaginary thinking. So, being a spiritual hospital, she takes us each year through a prescription of rehabilitation, for developing maturity, as we try to become more unified with God in His will for our lives. It gives us a type of spiritual therapy, requiring a certain amount of work from us...whereby we may attain some healing. Knowing that it would be too much of a shock to the system to jump right into a serious regimen of rehabilitation all at once, the Church asks us instead to begin by merely dipping our toe into the waters.

Therefore, this Sunday, we begin the 3 weeks of preparation before Great Lent (Lent begins, this year, on Monday, February 27th). Each week of preparation has its own separate theme, expressed in the Sunday Gospel Readings. This Sunday is the story of the *Tax Collector & the Pharisee Praying in the Temple* (no fasting at all this coming week). Next we have Christ's parable of the *Prodigal Son* (normal fasting on Wednesday & Friday). Then is Christ's warning about the coming *Final Judgement—Judging Whether We've Tangibly Shown Love to Others* (that begins our fasting entirely from meat). Finally, the gate is opened into Lent, the day before, with the Sunday of Forgiveness (fasting also then from dairy), where the setting of the sun encounters miraculous joy in Forgiveness Vespers.

This Sunday's Gospel Reading recounts Christ's parable of the Tax Collector (a person who was a reviled symbol of corruption in Jewish society) and the Pharisee (an upright expert in the Jewish religious Law). Both were in the temple praying at the same time. The Pharisee prayed, "*Thank You, God, that I'm not like other men—extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even like this Tax Collector.*" Meanwhile, the Tax Collector beat upon his own chest, crying out, "*O God, be merciful to me, the sinner!*" The Pharisee did indeed do good things...as he gave a tenth of his income to the temple, and another tenth of his income to the collections for the poor, not to mention the fact that he was fasting. It's very likely that he was a decent man by most people's standards...and he was undoubtedly looked upon by the people around him as an upright citizen. Unfortunately, however, any virtue he possessed was poisoned by his own spiritual pride—a poison that blinded him from seeing how very far he was from unity with God. He was self-satisfied and expressed no desire to change.



As we now begin preparing ourselves for the Lenten struggle, it's time to adjust our sight into correct perspective—right-placing ourselves with God and with the people around us. This Sunday, the Sunday of the Tax Collector & the Pharisee, is the time to beware of such self-satisfaction, of being content with being "*a decent person...at least not as bad as other people we've seen around us.*" Such a self-congratulatory, contented attitude can actually ruin our very salvation, because we allow ourselves to become blind to how far we really are from unity with God. Instead, we should become wise enough to imitate the Publican. Here was a man who, most likely, had become quite delinquent in the things of God, and consequently came to find himself in a dark pit of dishonor. He wanted a way back to life, but found himself constantly being sucked back into his old habits and giving in to old temptations. He plainly saw that he had no righteousness in himself—that without God, he was helplessly stuck in the same old cycle of corruption...and that he was in desperate need of God's mercy. "*O Lord,*" he cried, "*help me!*" When we have this

kind of humility, it becomes a powerful conduit for God's grace. The Tax Collector may not have been as upstanding as the Pharisee in the eyes of Jewish society, but his humility helped him transcend far above the poisonous self-satisfaction of the Pharisee, and he returned home justified, because he could actually now begin the process of becoming unified with God.

An ill-fated place from which to begin any journey is a serious miscalculation of our point of departure. If we are 6,000 miles away from our desired destination, but we imagine ourselves as having only a 3 minute walk, we seriously hinder the realization of that trip's destination. Therefore, as we prepare for the journey of Lent, the Church, in her wisdom, asks us now to abandon the fantasy scenario, where we see ourselves as already having attained this very close relationship with God...and to instead, realistically see how very far away we are from unity with Him. She invites us to cry out, "*Lord, help me!*" And she summons us to prepare ourselves, by taking a realistic assessment of our needed exercises for rehabilitation. Since we all want eternal unity with God, let's continually make ourselves as present as possible for the healing He offers us.

• **JOY**



THIS Sunday, February 5, following Sunday School, the kids will meet with Presvytera Danita in the hall, where they will learn how to make koliva. Kids are

encouraged to bring names of departed family members and friends. After we've made the koliva, Fr. Allan will teach the kids about the Church's tradition of memorials. Then we will have a memorial service together. Parents are welcome to join.

House Blessings



Thank you to those who have taken the time to schedule a House Blessing. There are **Three weeks left.** If you wish to have your house or business blessed, **don't delay, please fill out the form**

(available on the Secretary's desk) and turn it into Fr. Allan's mail box **as quickly as possible.**

⌘ **NOTE:** Please don't base the scheduling of your visit on a perceived need to feed Fr. Allan, or give him a stipend, or on whether you feel your house is clean enough. He loves you and just wants you and your house to be blessed. ☩

Sunday's Reading

Click on the link below to read this Sunday's Epistle & Gospel: **Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee: Triodion Begins.**

Epistle Reading:

http://www.goarch.org/chapel/lectionary_view?type=E&code=349&event=1150&date=2/5/2017

Gospel Reading:

http://www.goarch.org/chapel/lectionary_view?type=G&code=272&event=1150&date=2/5/2017

For Meditation

What is a merciful heart? It is a heart on fire for the whole of creation, for humanity, for the birds, for the animals, for demons, and for every created thing. At the recollection and at the sight of them such a person's eyes overflow with tears owing to the vehemence of the compassion which grips his heart; as a result of his deep mercy his heart shrinks and cannot bear to hear or look on any injury or the slightest suffering of anything in creation. This is why he constantly offers up prayer full of tears, even for the irrational animals and for enemies of truth, even for those who harm him, so that they may be protected and find mercy. ~From *The Ascetical Homilies of St Isaac the Syrian*

Sunday Service Teams

• **WELCOME MINISTRY**

February 5: Cleo Constantin and Bob Whitehead
Next Sunday: Karen Ambus and Joann Photopoulos

• **READER**

February 5: Andrew Nieuwsma
Next Sunday: Nick Jost

• **COFFEE HOUR**

February 5: A + B + C
Next Sunday: D + F + G

➤ **NOTE:**

- *Coffee Hour teams...*
- *please bring a bottle of Half & Half on Sundays.*
- *please set up & break down tables & chairs.*

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP

Join us!



• **PROSFORA OFFERING**

February 5: Ginny Silva
Next Sunday: Helen Kyriakopoulos

• **FLOWER MINISTRY**

February 5: Ginny Silva
Next Sunday: Moriah Condos

Services & Events

- **MEMORIAL SERVICE**

A Memorial Service will be held this **Sunday, February 5** for Dan d'Arms and Marie d'Arms.

May their memory be eternal!

- **DIVINE LITURGY**

On **Monday, February 6** at 7:00 am for St. Photius.

- **FORUM MEETING**

On **Tuesday, February 7** at 7:00 pm.

- **THE WHYS OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY CLASS**

On **Wednesday, February 8** at 7:00 pm.

- **SOUL SATURDAY'S**

On **Saturday February 18, 25 and March 4** at 8:30 am. Please bring a small bowl of koliva and a list of names of the departed loved ones to be commemorated.

- **EDUCATION MEETING**

On **Tuesday, February 21** at 6:30 pm.

- **TEEN YOUTH GROUP**

On **Friday, February 24** at 7:00 pm.

- **FORGIVENESS VESPERS**

On **Sunday, February 26** at 7:00 pm.

- **LENT BEGINS**

On **Clean Monday February 27.**

- **COMPLINE**

On **Monday, February 27** at 7:00 pm.

- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

On **Tuesday, February 28** at 7:00 pm.

Stewardship 2017

As we come to a close with our 2016 pledges we ask that you begin to consider continuing giving of your time and talents to our parish by filling out the New Stewardship Cards for 2017. They have been printed and made available for us. Offer this tangible sign of love for God and for our beloved Saint Basil parish

Please prayerfully fill out a 2017 Stewardship Pledge Card, to support Saint Basil ministries. As our Lord

has blessed each of us so generously...so also be generous toward Him. Together, "as coworkers with Him," our beloved parish will thrive, growing in Christ. Glorify Him!

Ministry Opportunities

- **GALA 2017**



SAVE THE DATE and MARK YOUR CALENDARS

September 9 at 5:30 pm The Villages.

Mariah Condos has offered to chair the Gala this year. Thank you, Moriah! We currently have an opportunity for one or more persons to offer their skills, planning and implementing the 2017 Saint Basil Gala. This ministry has been vital in helping our parish fulfil its financial obligations. If you, would like to help by serving our parish please contact Moriah Condos, Annie Agah or Presvytera Danita.

Bookstore

The St. Basil Bookstore is here for your needs. It is stocked with icons and books which will enhance your spiritual growth along with your families and friends. Besides books, we also carry many other Orthodox items such as sensors, vigil lamps, prayer books, prayer ropes to name just a few for both personal or gift-giving purposes. You are encouraged to browse the bookstore after each service or during the secretary's workdays (Tuesday - Thursday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm). Feel free to ask questions. Let us know if you can't find something; maybe we can order it for you.

Prayer Request

Are you sick or will be having surgery? If so, please let the office know and we can include your name on the prayer request list.

Please keep in your prayers:

Fr Jim Foreso	Giovanni Nitis
John Anhari	Nicholas Manis
Samira Bahous	Voula Papadatos
Levi Blain	George Pettis
Elaine Bracket	Georgia Photopoulos
Maria Davis	Paul Rousseve
Andrew Froumis	Mary Sarcone
Philip Gosvener	Joanne Smith
Otto Hampel	Anna Stavaridis
Elaine Honjas	Kristos Stavropoulos
Alyssa Jimenez	Nicholas Steely
Ron Jimenez	Nicholai Taranin
Shamiram Joseph	Thanasis Theologides
Lillian Kawar	Vickie Wilson
Vasso Koffas	Lena Xydes
Athena Lofaro	Nectarios
May Louie	George Zambos
George Nicholas	Suzanna Zeitler
Megan Ng	



• **KONEVETS QUARTET**

Male vocal ensemble from St. Petersburg, Russia will perform a concert which offers a fascinating program of harmonic brilliance in the rich tradition of Russian and Ukrainian choral music and the male chamber choir. They sing Church music, Russian and Ukrainian famous folk songs and romances.

You may hear their performances at:

- **Friday, February 10, 2017 at 7:00 pm**
Prophet Elias Greek Orthodox Church
223 Church Street, Santa Cruz, 95060 (831) 429-6500
- **Saturday, February 11, 2017 at 6:00 pm**
St. Nicholas OCA
14220 Elva Ave., Saratoga, CA

• **SUMMER CAMP**



Saint Nicholas Ranch, Summer Camp registrations usually fill up by the end of January. So, don't delay, get your kids registered ASAP. You can easily register your kids online by going to the following link:
<http://www.youth.sanfran.goarch.org/editor/summer-camp/>

Bay Area Events

• **FAMILY WELLNESS MINISTRY**

The Metropolis is offering a Family Wellness Ministry Program on **February 3 – 4**. See below for more details.



Metropolis of San Francisco
Family Wellness Ministry
"Face to Face ~ Heart to Heart"

Feb. 3-4, 2017, the Family Wellness Ministry (FWM) will be facilitating a **Regional Interactive Leadership Conference** in the Bay Area at **Holy Trinity in San Francisco**.

You will have the opportunity to meet our entire Family Wellness Ministry Team, learn more about this new and dynamic ministry - and how YOU can be a part of it.

Join us to hear from dynamic speakers (George Papageorge, Fr. Tom Tsagalakis, and Fr. Timothy Pavlatos), engage in discussions and experience a conference which is relevant, engaging, and interactive. We will meet at Holy Trinity in San Francisco Feb. 3, Friday Eve. 7-9 p.m., and Feb. 4, Saturday, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.)

For more information and to register for this free conference, please click on our website: www.familywellnessministry.org/conferences

Let Maria Know...



Let Maria know...

- 1) if you no longer wish to receive the eBulletin.
- 2) if you would like to be added to our weekly eBulletin distribution list. Please provide me with your first & last name and email address.
- 3) if we have your current contact information: name, address, phone number(s) and email address.

You can send an email to Maria at: stbasilschurch@sbcglobal.net or call 408-268-3214 on Tuesday – Thursday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Thank you!

Now Enrolling



Safari Kid has over 30 locations in USA, Canada, Hong Kong, Malaysia and India for Preschool and Pre-K Programs. They have an ability-based learning program committed to helping all students become lifelong learners:

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- Imaginative Explorations
- Phonics & Math
- Stem Program
- Social/Emotional Development
- Music & Movement
- Customized Curriculum

Call 408-600-6031 or visit www.safarikidUSA.com or www.facebook.com/safarikidalmaden to enroll your child today!

Bulletin Deadline

All announcements and articles must be written as you would like them to appear in the bulletin(s). Changes and edits might be made. They must be emailed to: stbasilschurch@sbcglobal.net **BY WEDNESDAY MORNING, 10:00 AM.** Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.
