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PROGRAMME FEBRUARY 2019



THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE (Apolytikion)

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, full of grace! / From you shone the
Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God. / Enlightening those who
sat in darkness! / Rejoice, and be glad, O righteous elder; / You
accepted in your arms the Redeemer of our souls, / Who grants
us the Resurrection.

PROGRAMME FEBRUARY 2018

SATURDAY 2nd FEBRUARY: THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE,
Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am

SUNDAY 3rd FEBRUARY: SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON, Matins and Divine
Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

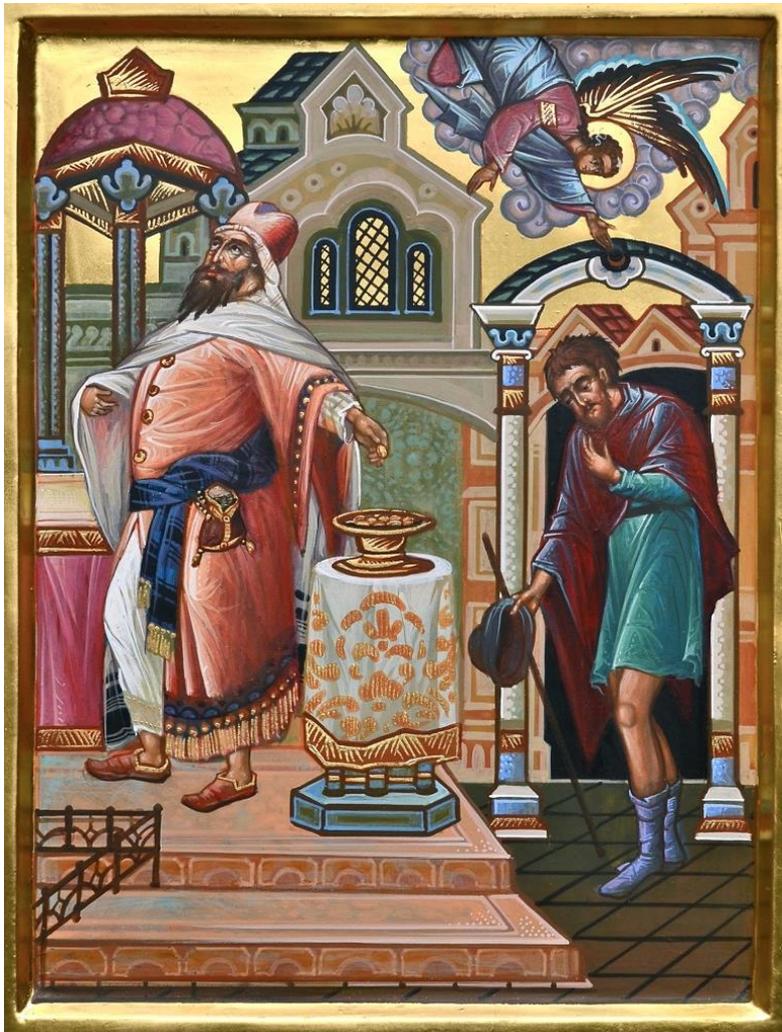
WEDNESDAY 6th FEBRUARY: Saint Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople, 7.30-
9.30am

SUNDAY 10th FEBRUARY: SAINT HARALAMBOS, Matins and Divine Liturgy,
7.30-11.00am

SUNDAY 17th FEBRUARY: SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE,
Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

SUNDAY 24th FEBRUARY: SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON, Matins and Divine
Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

TUESDAY 26th FEBRUARY: Saint Fotini, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am



*The Publican and the
Pharisee*

The First Lesson Before the Beginning of Great Lent: On the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

PRIEST SERGEI SVESHNIKOV | 06 FEBRUARY 2009

Dear in Christ brothers, sisters, and children,

Today, we begin the cycle of services from the Lenten Triodion. The Holy Church is preparing us for Great Lent. In these weeks before Lent begins, the Church, our loving Mother, offers to us the treasure of the Gospel reading about the Pharisee and the tax collector, the parable of the prodigal son, and the words of Christ about His second coming. It is easy to see that these passages are connected to each other and that together they carry a message: in the story about the Pharisee and the tax collector we learn about humility (Lk. 18:14); only humility allows us to see our true state on our knees at the pig trough of sin, as did the prodigal son (Lk. 15:17), and urges us to return to the Father (Lk. 15:18); and our choice to get on the correct path, to return home, puts us in the Father's embrace (Lk. 15:20) and allows us to be counted among his flock (Mat. 25:31-33).

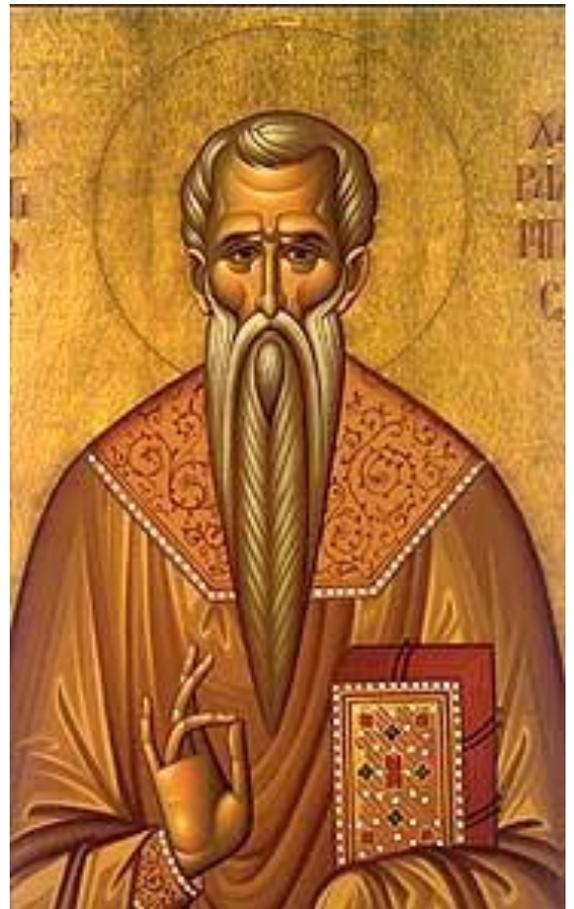
But let us listen carefully, let us ponder: the very first lesson we are to learn on our path to Great Lent, the very first example that the Church offers us before the beginning of the fast, is not that of Saint Mary of Egypt, who exercised prayer and fasting in the wilderness, or that of Saint Anthony the Great, who is known for his severe asceticism. Rather, we are offered the example of a tax collector, a publican, who probably did not fast at all, at least not as much as did the Pharisee, but who "went home justified before God" (Lk. 18:14). Strange thing: we are preparing for Lent, but all next week we do not fast at all, not even on Wednesday and Friday! This is not in order to fatten up before the fast, as some may think, but in order to set our minds and hearts straight, in order to help us understand the most important thing about fasting: a fast is not a diet, it is a medicine to cure an illness other than gluttony. Without the publican's humility, without his realization that we are not even worthy to lift up our eyes (Lk. 18:13), without the words "God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" (Lk. 18:13) becoming not just the publican's prayer, but our prayer, our fast will be worthless and even dangerous, as our pride leads us to assume the Pharisee's foolish stance: "I thank you, God, that I am not like other men..." (Lk. 18:11)

Let us then “flee the vaunting of the Pharisee and learn the humility of the Publican” (Kondakion), let us remember this lesson as we enter into Great Lent in just a few weeks. Let us not boast to ourselves about the lack of oil in our potatoes if we equally lack the oil of forgiveness for people around us, or about the small size of our meals if our pride flows as if from the Horn of Plenty. The goal of fasting is humility and a clearer vision of our true fallen state, “for he who exalts himself shall be humbled. Let us humble ourselves before God, and with fasting cry aloud as the Publican: ‘God, be merciful to us sinners’” (a verse for “Lord, I have cried..”).

St Charalambos The Wonder-Worker

Commemorated February 10

St Charalambos was a priest in the city of Magnesia, near Smyrna in Asia Minor. About 198 AD, Sevirus, the Emperor of the Roman Empire had appointed Loucius to govern Asia Minor. Many Christians were persecuted under his reign. At this time Charalambos was in Magnesia and openly taught the Christian religion. When Loucius discovered this, he captured Charalambos for trial. Asked why he condemned the idols and disobeyed the laws of the Empire, Charalambos informed Loucius that he adhered to the laws of Jesus Christ and no others. He maintained that Christ offered eternal life to his followers. The governor commanded Charalambos to sacrifice to the gods and forsake Christ, or else undergo fierce tortures. The Saint refused to deny his beliefs.



Charalambos was stripped of his clothing and his body was ripped with iron claws. He withstood the torture with courage. One of the dukes became enraged that he took the iron claw and began to rip Charalambos' flesh with more fervour than his soldiers. At this point the first miracle occurred. The Duke's hands became paralysed. Screaming, he asked Loucius to help him. Seeing the Duke's plight, the governor spat in the Saint's face. Immediately the pagan's head twisted in an awkward position, where it remained. The onlookers were terrified and begged the Saint to pray to Christ to save them. Charalambos beckoned them to pray and ask forgiveness for their sins. The Duke pleaded with Charalambos to pray to Christ to recover the use of his hands. When the Saint finished praying,

the Duke's hands were healed. He was then baptised and became a devout Christian.

After these events, many people from Magnesia and other parts of Asia came to Charalambos, confessed their sins and were baptised. The Saint performed many miracles by curing the faithful of many illnesses. When Sevirus heard of this he was greatly angered and sent soldiers to Magnesia to find the Saint, drive nails into his back, and then drag him from Magnesia to Antioch. The soldiers found Charalambos and carried out the order. They tied a rope to his beard and dragged him behind a horse, but a voice told them to leave this man alone for God was with him. Frightened, they took Charalambos to Antioch without further torture.

Sevirus, informed of what had happened, sent another group of soldiers to torture the Saint. They tied a skewer to his chest and gathered wood so that they could burn him. He was turned on the skewer with the fire burning him for several hours. Through Divine Help the Saint was not hurt. Sevirus ordered that the Saint be brought before him. He asked the Saint what his age was and was told that he was 113 years old.

A young man had died in the city and Sevirus ordered the Saint to resurrect him to show the strength of his God. After praying several hours, God, through Charalambos, performed the miracle. Many pagans converted to Christianity when they saw this, however, an eparch named Crispos asked Sevirus to execute the Saint because he had performed this miracle through the use of magic. Sevirus asked Charalambos to sacrifice to the gods to save himself but he refused, therefore, Sevirus ordered his soldiers to hit the Saint's jaws with rocks and burn his face and beard with torches. The fire reflected off the Saint's face and burned the bystanders. Sevirus was amazed at this time and was curious to know who Christ was. Crispos said to him that a harlot named Mary had borne Him. A man named Aristarchos warned Crispos not to blaspheme. A fit of madness overcame Sevirus and as he shot arrows towards the sky, he ordered Christ to come and fight him. Suddenly, the earth quaked and a fierce storm arose. Sevirus and Crispos begged the Saint to save them. Sevirus' daughter Galinee, came into the room and warned her father to believe in Christ. She asked the Saint to forgive her father and to pray to God to end this calamity. The Saint prayed and the acts of God stopped.

After 30 days, Sevirus again told Charalambos to sacrifice to the gods, but Charalambos refused. He then ordered that a bridle be placed in the Saint's mouth and that he be taken throughout the city in the same manner as a horse. Galinee begged her father to stop these tortures or else he would be condemned to eternal damnation. Sevirus was angered by his daughter's words and ordered her to

sacrifice to the gods. In the Temple of Zeus she told the priests that she cursed the gods, then she prayed to the true God. The statues of all the gods were destroyed. Sevirus ordered more statues to be made and placed in the temple so the people would not mock the gods. Once again, Galinee went to the temple, prayed to God and the statues were destroyed.

To insult Charalambos, he was driven to a widow to be guarded. When he arrived at her home, he leaned against a dry wooden beam. This beam was transformed into a tree. The woman was so frightened that she asked the Saint to leave her home since it was not worthy of his presence. He told her to have faith in God and she would have nothing to fear. The next day the neighbours saw the tree in her garden and upon asking, they learned of the miracle. They sat with the Saint and discovered Christianity. The pagans told Sevirus about these happenings and the eparch advised Sevirus to have Charalambos beheaded. The Saint was captured, but before his execution, he prayed to Christ. He died in peace before the soldiers could behead him. Galinee took his body and placed it in a golden coffin.

St. Charalambos guarded his people much as a shepherd would guard his flock, therefore, he is considered to be the protector of shepherds and their flocks. The body of St. Charalambos is now in the Monastery of Saint Stephen in the Meteora, Greece, where it performs miracles to this day.

8 MODERN MIRACLES OF SAINT HARALAMBOS

The following miracles are told by the nuns of St. Stephen's Monastery at Meteora of Thessaly, which houses the holy skull of St. Haralambos.

1. Epidemic On Mount Athos

Saint Haralambos has a special gift of healing pestilential diseases, and has often halted epidemics of typhus, cholera and the plague. In 1908 a deadly epidemic reached Mt. Athos, and the holy skull of the saint was taken from St. Stephen's on Meteora to the Protaton on Mt. Athos, where an all-night vigil was served. The epidemic halted immediately, and since then, each year, the monasteries celebrate an all-night vigil honoring St. Haralambos - the only saint besides the Mother of God to be so honored by the entire population of the Holy Mountain.

2. Maria's Child

In 1950, Maria Nairi's four-year-old daughter became paralyzed. Unable to help her, the doctors could do nothing for the child and sent her home to die. After

many nights of prayer, Maria saw St. Haralambos in a dream, and borrowing an icon of him from her church, kept it in her home for forty days with a lamp lit before it. On the eve of the Feast of the Holy Apostles (June 30), the saint appeared to the child and healed her. The room was filled with an indescribable fragrance and sweet-smelling myrrh flowed from the icon.

3. A Year Without Speech

On the west coast of Greece there is a church dedicated to the saint in thanksgiving for saving the town from a typhoid epidemic. One year St. Haralambos' feast fell in the week before Great Lent. In Greece, as in other parts of the world, this week is often celebrated with a secular carnival. A couple, who were passing by the church on the eve of the saint's feast, heard the singing for the vigil. The wife wanted to go in for the service, but the husband blasphemed the saint and said that he would go to the carnival instead. He was immediately stricken dumb. His wife took him into the church where he knelt and repented, and he regained his speech exactly a year later, on the feast of St. Haralambos.

4. Life Savings

In 1966, a Mr. Nikolaou was returning to his native village where he planned to retire, carrying with him his life savings. Reaching his village, he was horrified to discover he had lost the money. The next morning he set off again for Piraeus, hoping somehow to trace it. When he reached the village of Paligoyrgos, he saw a small chapel dedicated to St. Haralambos and went in to beseech his aid. Immediately he heard a voice telling him to look under the seat of the car in which he had ridden part way home the day before. He traced the car and found that the money had indeed fallen under the seat.

5. Endurance For Christ

A man with an incurable and extremely painful disease prayed to St. Haralambos frequently and fervently to heal him. Finally one night the saint appeared and told him that his sufferings were much less than those endured by Christ and that it would be better for him to bear his illness patiently than to have it cured, because it had been sent by God to help him work out his salvation.

6. The Novice's Sister

In 1978, a young woman came to St. Stephen's Monastery to be a monastic. She was clothed as a novice, but suffered terribly during her first few months because she was torn by her separation from her family. Her older sister came to visit, but only made the novice's sorrow greater by begging her to leave the monastery. In vivid colors she painted a picture of their parents sitting, night after night, heavy-hearted with grief at the absence of their youngest daughter. That night the elder sister slept in the monastery, and towards dawn she had a dream of St. Haralambos, who sternly reprimanded her for trying to make her sister leave, saying that it would greatly harm the young girl if she gave up the monastic path. As he scolded her, he slapped her hard across the cheek and she woke up feeling the sting of his hand. Needless to say, she obeyed, and one of the sisters who knows her says that, to this day, her cheek tingles from the sting of the slap.

7. The Twins

In January 1995, a woman came to visit the monastery from the town of Trikala and told the sisters that she had been childless for the first nineteen years of her marriage, and that doctors had told her she would never conceive. At the beginning of 1994, she began praying to St. Haralambos, who appeared to her one night in a dream and said not "You will have a child," but "You will have children." Two months later the woman conceived and at the end of the year gave birth to twin boys. She comes often now to visit the monastery with her little sons.

8. The "Monastery Priest"

In the early 1990's, a young man from the village in the area came to St. Stephen's Monastery with the intent to commit suicide by throwing himself off the bridge that connects the pinnacle of the rock to the road. He was standing on the bridge looking down into the chasm and preparing to jump, when an old priest came up and introduced himself as the spiritual father of the monastery. Although they had never met before, he began speaking to the young man about his life and trials, and encouraged him not to despair, promising him that God would help him. The young man felt an inner joy and peace. Going back to his home he began to attend Divine Liturgy regularly. A few weeks later he went to the monastery again and asked to speak to the old priest. The sister whom he met at the door told him there was no priest living there, that priests only came occasionally from the outside to serve Divine Liturgy, nor had there been any priest there on the day he mentioned. She asked him what the old priest had looked like, and he described in detail - St. Haralambos.