

“THE SOUL OF A REPENTANT SINNER IS OF INFINITE VALUE”—PATRIARCHS OF RUSSIA AND ROMANIA ON THE PRODIGAL SON



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son at the St. Alexander Nevsky Skete near Peredelkino, outside Moscow, yesterday.

At the end of the service, he offered a primatial homily on the theme of the Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son.

Through the form of the father in the parable, the Lord Himself reveals to us that it is God the Father who extends His mercy to fallen man, the Patriarch emphasized. It is he who has fallen hard, “who has lost his equilibrium, who has lost his way in life, that especially needs support,” Pat. Kirill preached, reports the site of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Slavonic name for the Prodigal Son literally translates as the “Fornicating Son,” which refers not only to the primary meaning of sexual sins, but indicates overall

delusion and the falling away from the right path in life, the Russian primate said.

“When people reject God, refuse to accept the only right path in life that the Lord has ordained, they also wander through life. And we know that this wandering is often accompanied by very painful blows against the obstacles that a person involuntarily meets on his way,” His Holiness emphasized.

In order to remain on the right path in life, we have to have a reliable guide and compass. And this guide, as the Patriarch exhorts, is the Lord Himself, “and if we live according to His commandments, if we accept His word, if we are guided by His teachings to the extent that we are able to do all this, then, undoubtedly, we are able, even if we go astray, to continue along the only saving road in life.”

And there is but one way to get back on track as taught us by the Lord’s parable, the Patriarch says: “sincere and heartfelt repentance before God.”

This Gospel reading is given to us on the eve of Lent to set us on the right spiritual path. Everyone faces temptations, but may the Lord grant that we find our way back through repentance, especially during Lent, His Holiness prays. And may we “return again to our Father’s house, to the place where salvation is found through communion with the Lord Himself. Amen,” the Patriarch concludes.

In his own homily offered at the Patriarchal Palace, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania also spoke of the Prodigal Son as a symbol of repentance and the Sacrament of Confession. “The moments of spiritual upliftment from the sin of the young prodigal are, in fact, the steps of repentance of every man who desires to change his life, to make peace with God, with his fellow man, and with himself,” he said, reports the Basilica News Agency.

The Romanian primate also focused on the lesson presented to us by the elder son, who refused to forgive his brother and rejoice at his repentance.

He “represents godly believers who carry out God’s commandments, but are often very critical of sinners whom they judge more than they help to correct,” His Beatitude noted.

Thus, this Gospel reading is not only that of the forgiveness of the Prodigal Son, but also the taming of the virtuous but unforgiving son, which depicts for us “the merciful, boundless love of God, a merciful love that overwhelms His justice.”

According to justice, the Prodigal Son deserved punishment, but according to mercy, “the soul of a repentant sinner is of infinite value.”

And reminding his flock of the great Lenten works, His Beatitude concluded: “Besides humble prayer, sincere repentance must then be completed with almsgiving and fasting, and thus we will advance to the joy of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity.”

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