17/02/2019

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

On this and the following two Sundays, the theme is repentance. Repentance is the door through which we enter Lent, the starting-point of our journey to Pascha. And to repent signifies far more than self-pity or futile regret over things done in the past. The Greek term metanoia means ‘change of mind’: to repent is to be renewed, to be transformed in our inward viewpoint, to attain a fresh way of looking at our relationship to God and to others. The fault of the Pharisee is that he has no desire to change his outlook; he is complacent, self-satisfied, and so he allows no place for God to act within him. The Publican, on the other hand, truly longs for a ‘change of mind’: he is self-dissatisfied, ‘poor in spirit’, and where there is this saving self-dissatisfaction there is room for God to act. Unless we learn the secret of the Publican’s inward poverty, we shall not share in the Lenten springtime. The theme of the day can be summed up in a saying of the Desert Fathers: ‘Better a man who has sinned, if he knows that he has sinned and repents, than a man who has not sinned and thinks of himself as righteous.’

Source: The Lenten Triodion. Mother Mary, of the Monastery of the Veil of the Mother of God, Bussy-en-Othe, and Archimandrite Kallistos Timothy Ware: 1977.

Gospel Reading: Luke 18:10-14 (Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee: Triodion Begins)

The Lord said this parable, “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

(source: theorthodoxworld.com)