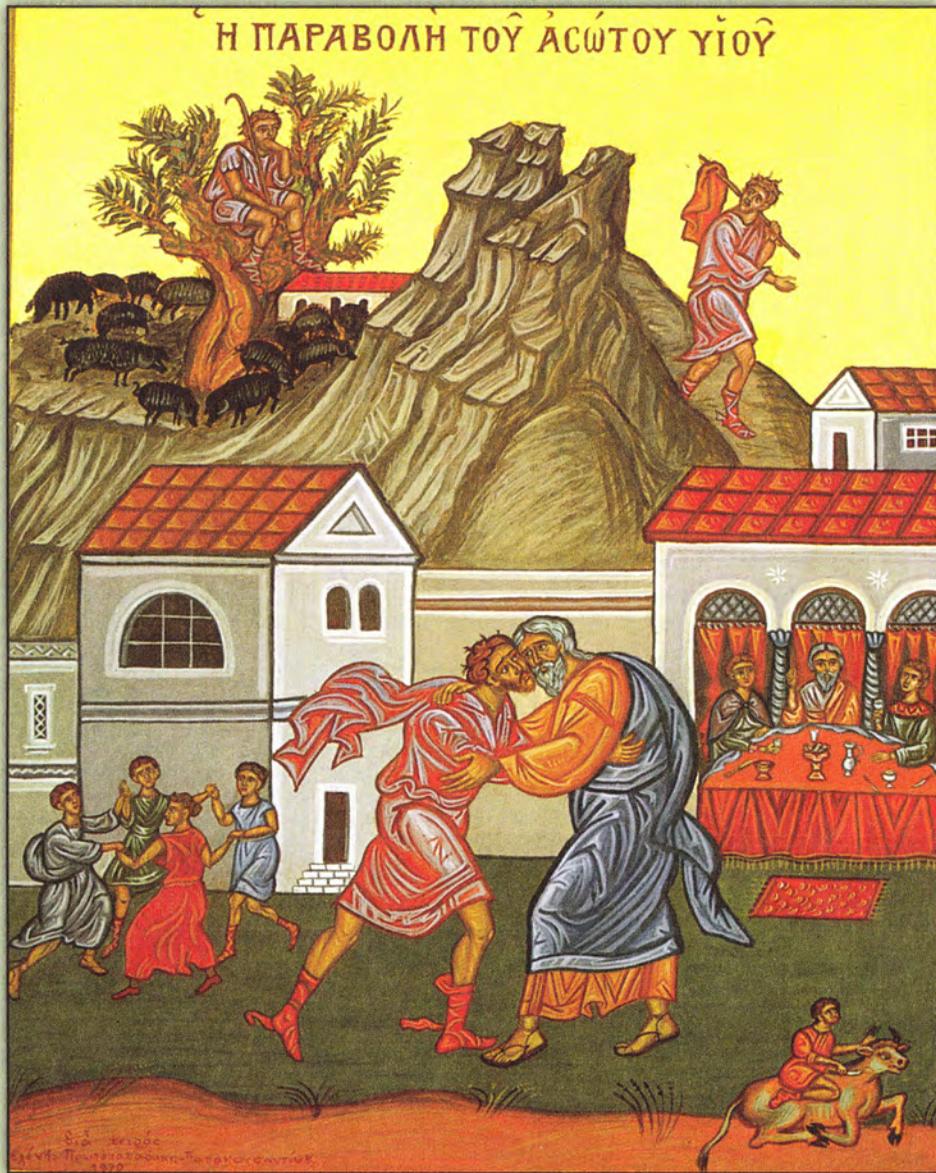


SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON



Icon of the Prodigal Son



February 1, 2015

TONE 1

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

THE HOLY MARTYR TRYPHON

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 2 – FEBRUARY 8

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2 – THE ENCOUNTER OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST WITH THE RIGHTEOUS SIMEON AND ANNA

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4 – OUR VENERABLE FATHER ISIDORE OF PELUSIUM

9:30 AM – Parastas

✙ Ihor Bohachevsky; Req: Maria Odezynskij

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7

6:00 PM – Great Vespers

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8 – *SUNDAY OF MEATFARE; THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR THEODORE, THE GENERAL OF HERACLEA; THE HOLY PROPHET ZECHARIAH, WHO BEHELD THE SICKLE*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

*If you are reading the bulletin during the Liturgy (including the homily),
please **stop** and be attentive – будьмо уважли!*

“The modern world looks for Divinity and the solution of its ills in the superman of H.G. Wells, in the sexualism of Sigmund Freud, in the naturalism of modern religion, in the book of the month, in the re-interpreted Christ, in the new morals, in the new psychology, in the new science – but in none of these inns is Divinity to be found. As it was not in the inn in the first century, so it shall not be found in the inn of the twentieth century, for what is true of the first day is true of our own: Divinity is always where you least expect to find it.”

*Archbishop Fulton Sheen
(The Hymn of the Conquered)*

Choir Practice

Today and each Sunday, there will be choir practice to prepare for Lent and Pascha as well as to introduce new melodies for the Divine Liturgy. Practices will begin at approximately 11:40 and last for about 20 minutes. If you haven't sung with the choir, consider joining!

1st All Souls Saturday

Next Saturday, February 7th is First All Souls Saturday. There will be a Divine Liturgy at 9:30 AM for all our beloved departed followed by a Panakhyda. Please write the names of all those you wish to be remembered and place in the basket in the back of the church today.

Looking Ahead:

- ❖ Feb. 7th – 1st All Souls Saturday
- ❖ Feb. 8th – Meatfare Sunday Luncheon
- ❖ February 15th – Cheesefare Sunday – Cheesy Pot-Luck followed by Forgiveness Vespers
- ❖ February 16th – The Great Fast Begins (day of strict fast)
- ❖ February 28th – 2nd All Souls Saturday
- ❖ March 7th – 3rd All Souls Saturday
- ❖ March 8th – Sunday of the Holy Cross
- ❖ March 14th – 4th All Souls Saturday
- ❖ March 21st – Akathist Saturday
- ❖ March 25th – Annunciation
- ❖ March 29th – Flowery Sundy
- ❖ April 5th – Pascha

14 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

December 14, 2014 by Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick

<http://blogs.ancientfaith.com/roadsfromemmaus/2014/12/14/14-new-years-resolutions-orthodox-christians/>

Around this time of year, many people start thinking about ways they can change for the better. While New Year's resolutions are not particularly a feature of the Orthodox faith, change certainly is, and resolving to change based on times and seasons is certainly part of our liturgical tradition. So adapting the cultural custom of New Year's resolutions to become a better Orthodox Christian seems perfectly fine to me. Anyway, here are some suggestions for Orthodox Christians resolving to change for the better in the New Year, things every Orthodox Christian can do.

(Obviously, adjust as needed according to the direction of your father-confessor and pastor.)

1. Get serious about coming to church (more).

While many who read this are no doubt at least every-Sunday attenders at church, it is statistically true that **only 26% of Orthodox Christians in America come to church weekly** (the statistic is drawn from people who are actually involved in parish life, not from anyone who was ever baptized Orthodox; that statistic would be much worse). That's really a horrible percentage. If you're not coming to church weekly, why not? There are probably some good reasons out there, but most of those 74% almost certainly do not have good reasons. **If you're not serious about coming to church weekly, it's time to get serious.** This is eternal life we're talking about, not a religious club.

And if you're already coming to church weekly, **consider adding at least one service per week.** Most parishes are doing Vespers and/or Matins at least once a week (usually Saturday night or Sunday morning). What are you normally doing when those services are going on? Your priest and other parishioners are there praying, including praying for you. Why don't you join them? You won't regret it.

And while we're at it...

2. Come to church on time.

It's kind of an in-joke that Orthodox people are always late to church. But why is that?

We too often accept the excuse that we function on "Greek time" or "Syrian time," etc., but even Greeks and Syrians (and whoever else; insert your preferred culture here) seem to be able to adapt to show up to nearly everything else on time. Why can we show up on time for work, sporting events, movies, doctor's appointments, etc., but reserve our tardiness for an encounter with the King of Kings?

There are some kinds of events for which it doesn't much matter if you come at a particular time—parties, various kinds of social gatherings, etc.—**but church services aren't one of them.** There is a definite beginning and a definite ending. If you show up late, you are late. And if you leave early, you are skipping out.

What you show up on time for tells the world what you find important. It's what you find indispensable. And when you show up late to church, it also tells your fellow parishioners that you don't consider church very important.

And it also communicates it to your kids. And you can be assured that they will imitate you.

Come at least ten minutes early. That says you are serious. You know what also says you're serious?

3. Tithe.

Nothing says you're serious like giving 10% of your income to something.

Giving 10% to God sounds crazy to a lot of people, but the reality is that it's actually totally normal for many Christians—even for generations. Orthodox people in the US aren't used to tithing (10%) or even giving some other percentage, mainly because many of their forebears across the sea gave to their churches just by paying their taxes. That doesn't work anywhere in the English-speaking Orthodox world. Your taxes

do not go to support your church. (I know of one church where a parishioner was shocked to discover that the electric company would turn off the electricity if the church didn't pay its bill. Who would do that to a church?)

And other parishioners inherited a system based on union dues. So many may think that giving \$500 a year (less than \$10/week) is a lot. But if you have a parish of 100 families and each family only gives \$500 a year, **then you only have an annual income of \$50,000**. With that, you cannot support your priest, and you certainly cannot pay for a building and its maintenance. Other people are picking up the slack for you. If they're not, your priest may be on food stamps or welfare. I know some who are.

But if those 100 families each made the median household income for the US (about \$52,000), and they all tithed, **that same 100-family parish would have \$520,000 to work with**. If they even gave just 5%, they'd have \$260,000.

Meanwhile, you are probably spending a lot more just on cable TV. Or Internet access. Or your smartphone. Or eating out. Or coffee. Or a lot of other things.

But the most important thing about pledging and tithing is not about meeting parish budgets or supporting your priest like the hardworking, educated man he is. **It's about worship**. Your heart is where your treasure is (Matt. 6:21). Where's your treasure? Follow the money, find the heart.

If you're not up for 10% yet, then try 8%. Or 6%. Or whatever. **But go on record, and get disciplined about giving**. Don't give until it hurts, but until it actually feels good.

4. Pray at home.

Even if all you do is say the "Our Father" when you wake up (saying it three times a day is the most ancient known prayer rule), you will notice a change in how you think and feel about your faith. It will become more present for you and will define you more.

Oh, and, parents? **It will have a huge impact on your kids**. Watching parents pray at home and (in time) joining them in that prayer is one of the biggest contributions that kids can receive

toward their long-term spiritual viability.

If you don't bring the faith home, you can forget about it mattering in the long run, either for you or your kids.

5. Sing along at church. And stand more.

The choir and chanters are there to **lead you in prayer**, not to entertain you or pray instead of you. Yes, it is possible to pray with them silently, but there are few things more spiritually invigorating than singing your prayers. So if you're able, you should.

And while you're at it, why don't you **stand up** a bit more? It's certainly easier to sing while standing. And it's also the 2000-year-old tradition of the Orthodox Church to stand during worship. So there's that.

Update: I've received several comments which include strong opinions on the issue of congregational singing. I know that it's a subject of some debate. Obviously, this note of encouragement here is meant to be taken in terms of the caveat I originally posted at the top of this piece—check with your father-confessor and/or pastor as to what is appropriate in your community.

Because I'm not interested in hosting a debate about congregational singing, I won't be publishing any further comments about it.

6. Memorize a psalm.

Memorizing Scripture is a great thing for many reasons, but psalms are especially powerful, because they are all prayers. Pick your favorite one to memorize. Lots of Orthodox love Psalm 50 ("Have mercy on me, O God..."). But there are plenty to choose from. Pick a short one or a long one. Just make it your own. Try praying it every day.

7. Encourage your priest.

Yes, he should be willing to do his job without getting any encouraging words. And many priests do. That wouldn't be so bad if they didn't get so many complaints. While some priests (like me!) aren't constantly barraged with complaints, some never can seem to escape them, even while they pour their lives out for their people. And I would actually have to say that I probably get more complaints than I do encouraging words.

My brother priests mostly say the same thing.

Your priest is a human being just like you are. And while he shouldn't live for praise, you can help him see that his hard work is appreciated by telling him so. Your job isn't to tell him that he shouldn't want praise—he has a father-confessor to tell him that. Your job is to love him. And saying encouraging things to him is part of that love. You don't have to shower him with compliments. Just tell him that what he's doing matters to you.

I have some people in my parish who say encouraging things to me. I don't live for their kind words, but they help to keep me going, because it reminds me that what I'm doing matters.

There is nothing better for a parish's health than an encouraged priest. If he feels like what he's doing matters, he will love doing it. And he will also strive to get better at it, too. So even if you do feel like he needs to improve, the best way to help him do that is to inspire him, not to complain at him.

8. Invite someone to church.

Did you know that **82% of the unchurched say that they would come if invited?** Did you know that **only 2% of church members invite someone to church in a given year?**

If your parish is dying (and many Orthodox parishes in the US, especially in the Northeast, are indeed dying), don't you think it's time you invited someone to church? If your parish is healthy, don't you think it's time it gave birth to another healthy one?

Do you really believe that you've found the true faith, seen the true light and received the heavenly Spirit, like you sing near the end of the Liturgy?

Then why are you keeping it to yourself? Think of at least one person you know who isn't in church. Make him or her a spiritual priority this year. Pray every day for that person. And when the time is right, give the invitation. Statistically speaking, they are probably going to say yes.

And when you make the invitation, don't say, "You should come to church with me sometime." "Sometime" is no time. Say, "We're celebrating the

Divine Liturgy this Sunday at 9am at my church. Can I pick you up and bring you with me?"

9. Visit a monastery.

You won't believe how amazing monastic visits are until you go on one. There are few things that underline for us how much is really possible in the Christian life like visiting people who are actually making a go at being 24/7/365 Christians.

And don't you think that people who practice prayer that much might know a thing or two about it?

Monasteries aren't just for monks and nuns. They're for all Christians. They are not only spiritual havens but also spiritual powerhouses. And don't just visit once and say you did it. **Develop a relationship.**

And maybe if you're really blessed, one of your kids will join a monastery and pray for you a whole lot. I hope one of mine does.

10. Read the Old Testament.

Yes, we should read the whole Bible, but the truth is that most Orthodox Christians are crypto-Marcionites—we **know almost nothing about the Old Testament.** Marcion was a 2nd century heretic who taught that the Old Testament was a book for Jews and had nothing to do with Christians. He was really wrong. The Old Testament is about the thousands of years of preparation before the coming of Jesus Christ. It is what sets the stage for His appearance. Jesus is everywhere in the Old Testament, but you have to know how to look for Him.

The Old Testament is filled with all kinds of fascinating stories, prayers, songs, poetry, etc. But most of us have almost no idea that it has much other than Adam and Eve, Noah and Jonah. And we're probably a little fuzzy on some of those details.

But if God prepared the world for the coming of Jesus by what He did in the Old Testament, how can we think we'll be prepared for His coming into each of our own lives without any of that same preparation?

Want a plan that will get you through the whole Bible in one year? Here's one.: <http://michaelhyatt>.

[com/myresources/osb-bible-reading-plan.pdf](http://www.myresources/osb-bible-reading-plan.pdf) There are others, too. <http://www.christianorthodox.net/an-orthodox-bible-reading-plan/> or <http://www.antiochian.org/AW-ReadThroughBible>

If you need help getting through it all (especially because it's way bigger than the New Testament), why don't you ask your priest to start a Bible study going over some of the Old Testament books? He'll probably be smiling so much after he gets up off the floor in shock that he won't know what to do with himself.

So, that makes me think of something else.

11. Attend an adult education class.

It's actually kind of crazy how uneducated many Orthodox people are in their own faith. I sometimes hear the excuse that that stuff is just for seminarians and clergy, that it's too intellectual, too far above the heads of the average parishioner, etc. But the very same people can give you detailed information about what the rules and records in the Super Bowl are, what their least favorite politician has done to wreck the country, and what the latest gossip is on various celebrities, all in remarkable detail. But when it comes to what will last into eternity, we are suddenly the dumbest people on the face of the earth.

Don't sell yourself short. You are probably pretty smart about many things. **Why don't you use that same talent to get smart about your faith?**

It's also quite frankly true that most Protestants are far more educated about their Protestant faiths than Orthodox are about their own. Are we really supposed to believe that Protestants are just smarter? They're not. But they've developed a culture of education. A culture of education is not a uniquely Protestant thing. It's Orthodox, too. It's been part of our tradition for 2000 years. It's just that some of us have forgotten it. **It's time to bring it back.**

12. Volunteer.

Do something in your parish or in your community that **benefits other people without giving you any kind of material gain.** And do it without expecting recognition. Your recognition will come from God in His Kingdom. You don't need it from anyone else.

Not only will selfless volunteering help you be grateful for all that God has given to you, but it will set an example of what a Christian is for your kids and your friends, and it will also help you to be humble, something we know is necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

13. Go to confession.

There are lots of Orthodox Christians who go to confession only once a year—or maybe even never. Like people who never go to the doctor, what that means is that you think everything is perfectly fine and you need no help. Literally, it means that you do not think you need the gift of forgiveness that comes in the sacrament of absolution.

I don't know about you, but I'm a sinner. I mean, I sin every day. I have a problem. **I'm a sinner.** I need to confront my sins directly in confession. **And I want the sacrament of absolution that goes with it.**

I try to go once during each of the four fasts (though I will admit that I don't always keep my rule very well), and I always dread going before I go, because I don't like thinking about how I am a sinner. And then I always wonder what took me so long after I go. It's really wonderful, actually.

Thank God for confession.

14. Read a spiritual book.

There are few things that get us into another story, another way of looking at life, like a good book. And a good spiritual book can help to retrain your mind to become like the mind of Christ. Most of us do not have the mind of Christ. We have the mind of something else. Our minds are filled with distractions, necessities and the cares of this world.

But the extended meditation on what is good and true and beautiful that can come from a good spiritual book can help to change all that. And you know what? That change helps to bring us peace. And that's something that each of us needs a whole lot more of.

Okay, so those are some of my ideas for ways to change positively in the new year.

What are yours?

The Bible in the Liturgy

Come join us as we begin a “Journey through the Liturgy” by examining the scriptural foundation of the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. Beginning Wednesday, February 18th, following the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, enjoy a lenten meal and bible study.

Meatfare Sunday brunch

Stay after the Divine Liturgy next week, February 8, for a delicious Meatfare luncheon provided by the parish. Price: a free-will offering.

Forgiveness Sunday

On February 15th there will be a “Cheesy Potluck” following the Divine Liturgy. This is the last opportunity to enjoy dairy products before the Great Fast begins. Please bring a meatless dish to share with others. (Please note: there are people in our community with severe and life threatening allergies so please no nuts or mushrooms.) Immediately following the potluck we will celebrate Forgiveness Vespers in the church to open the Great Fast. This is a beautiful opportunity to begin the fast with mutual forgiveness.

Thank you to all those who helped make Varenyky. The Christmas Varenyky / bake sale brought in \$449.00. Sale of cards brought in \$176.00.

“Since it is so likely that children will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage.”

– C.S. Lewis

On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature”

Sunday offering for January 18

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$15.00	2
\$20.00	4
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	5
\$75.00	2
<u>\$300.00</u>	<u>1</u>
\$895.00	

Parishioner Total: \$890.00
Visitor Total: \$5.00

Average / parish household (42): \$10.99
Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00
Deficit: **(\$1235.00)**

Sunday offering for January 25

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$10.00	2
\$15.00	2
\$20.00	1
\$32.00	1 (loose)
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	2
\$50.00	2
\$100.00	1
<u>\$300.00</u>	<u>1</u>
\$737.00	

Parishioner Total: \$727.00
Visitor Total: \$10.00

Average / parish household (42): \$8.98
Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00
Deficit: **(\$1398.00)**

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Despite His Sin, the Spirit Was Still with the Son

It was the same with the younger son who squandered his property and wasted his father's property living among prostitutes. Despite all this, he did not lose his honorable title of son. In the land of captivity, having rejected his father, he rather remembered, "How many hired servants are at this moment in my father's house who have more than enough bread, but here am I perishing from hunger."

He was still a sinner. He had sinned to such an extent that he had thrown to the winds with his misdeeds the entire inheritance he had received from his father. He still called God his father. This indicates that the grace of the Spirit, which authorizes him to call God Father, did not depart from him.

We are unable to employ this term of address and call God Father, except through the

authority of the Holy Spirit who is within us. It is well known that those who have not yet become God's children by the holy rebirth of baptism are not authorized to use this term. They are not permitted to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

The apparent reason for this is that the Holy Spirit is not yet within them to give them this authorization. It is well known to all that, when they approach the holy mysteries, the newly baptized all repeat this prayer with confidence in accordance with the tradition handed down by our Lord, and then they proceed to the holy mysteries.

Philoxenus of Hierapolis

**For more information on Eastern spirituality, visit
www.mytheosis.com**