



THE ST. ELIZABETH'S PARISH NEWS



St. Elizabeth's Orthodox Mission Church

2265 E. Cherokee Dr. Woodstock, GA
A Parish of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

Reverend Father Matthew Dutko Pastor/Administrator

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Sunday February 4th 2018

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Epistle: 1st Corinthians 6:12-20

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Glory be to Jesus Christ!!!



If you have never been to an Orthodox Church before you are about to participate in the Divine Liturgy. The Liturgy is the work of the people and that means that all of your prayers are necessary! We hope you will stay and join us for coffee hour in the atrium. Please feel free to ask Fr. Matthew any questions you might have! May God's blessings be upon all of you!

Tropar and Kondak Tone 2– Blue Book pg. 84 Red Book pg. 99

Kondak of the Prodigal Son Blue Book pg. 175 Red Book pg. 197-198

Many Years Master!

Welcome Bishop Gregory!

Your Grace Bishop Gregory,

The St. Elizabeth Orthodox Church community welcomes you with love and joy in our hearts. We thank you, our shepherd, for remembering St. Elizabeth's and all of us in your prayers, for visiting us today, and for continually leading us on our spiritual pilgrimage to Christ and His Kingdom. It is always a joy to celebrate the Liturgy with our Bishop and we give thanks to God for receiving this great blessing once again. We pray for your safe travel back home, strength and grace in your ministry and many more years working in Christ's vineyard.

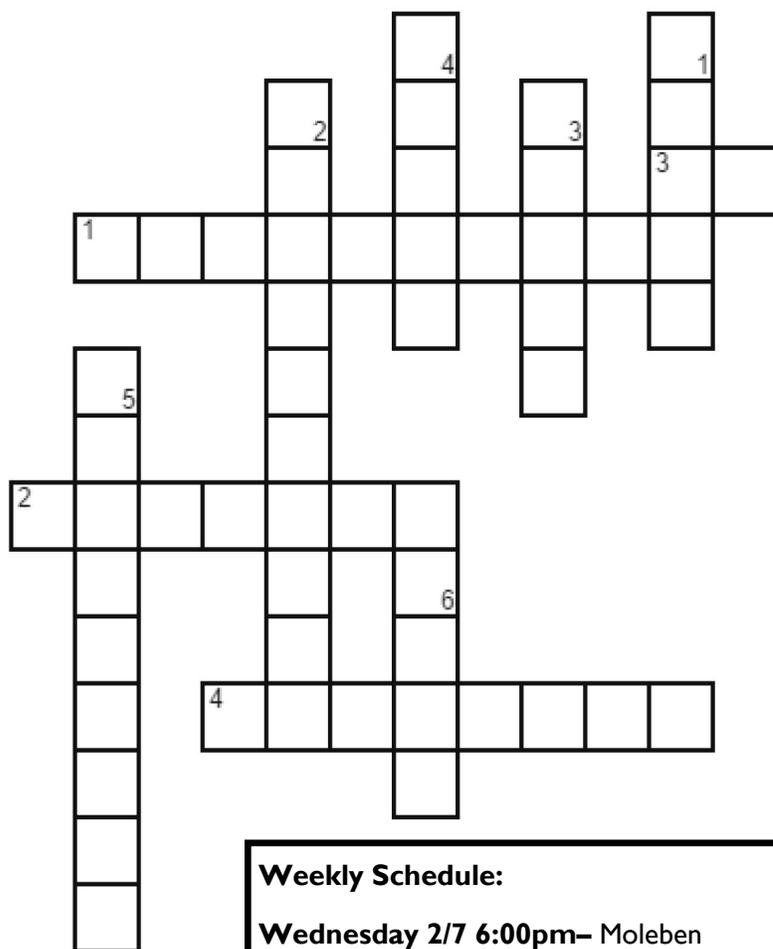
With love in Christ,

The St. Elizabeth Orthodox Church Family



Evelyn Melnikoff, Fr. John and Pani Betty Jean Baranek, Fr. James Gleason, The Paccio Family, Kara, Johanna, James, Herbert and Mary Schleinig, Patricia+ (Blessed Repose), James+ (Blessed Repose), Anna, Basil, David, Dianna, Denise, Alex, Jason, Athanasia, Ethel, Kathy, Lester, Sally, Jack, Angela, Tyler, Maria, Jeff, Lesley, Page Family, Stephen (Blessed Repose), The Blonar Family, Anna+ (Blessed Repose), Louise, Emma Rae, The Floyd Family, Phillip (Blessed Repose), Zachary, George, Fred and Helen Mileshko, Robin, Michael, Dean, Margaret, Jenny+ (Blessed Repose) and Keith, Peter (blessed repose), Bishop Gregory and his family, Bryan +(Blessed Repose), Rick, the James Family, Fr. Scott, Rebecca Cooper+ (Blessed Repose), Fr. Paul Herbert+ (Blessed Repose), Joseph, Boris, Maria+ (Blessed Repose), Maria Starcova, Ernie +(Blessed Repose), Fr. Hazuda+ (Blessed Repose), Janis,, David Novak, Suzette Gardenhour, Bob, David, Michelle, Stephen, James, Brian Paul, George Smisko+ (Blessed Repose), Kathy, Mike, Helen S+ (Blessed Repose), Bob+ (Blessed Repose), Debbie, Alma+ (Blessed repose), Ken, The Hayes and Boucher families, Bo+ (Blessed Repose), Sadie+ (Blessed Repose), Peyton & the Gully Family, John, Alexandra, Benjamin, John, The Hazuda Family, Fr. William George+ (Blessed Repose), Pani Amy George and the George Family, Violet+ (Blessed Repose), Madeline, Eddie, Fr. Kozar+ (Blessed Repose), Mary, Benjamin+ (Blessed Repose), Cathy, Jay Brackin, Drew, John Haddad+ (Blessed Repose), Marilyn & family, Mark, Fr. John Zboyovski & family, Nathaniel, Kasi, Scarlett, Athena, Tim, George, - Through the prayers of the Birthgiver of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, St. Elizabeth, The Holy Fathers, and all the Saints, may our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ have mercy on us and save us!

The Prodigal Son



Across

Weekly Schedule:

Wednesday 2/7 6:00pm– Moleben
(Prayer Service) Followed by Discovering
Orthodoxy Class

Saturday 2/10 9am– All Souls Saturday
Divine Liturgy **10:15am** Baptism of Scar-
lett and Athena Eaton

Sunday 2/11 10AM– Divine Liturgy

1. The Father had every right to be angry, but when he saw his son, he instead had _____.
2. Our Heavenly Father is waiting and ready to receive us with His loving forgiveness and His saving _____.
3. In this parable the Prodigal Son is ____.
4. In this parable the father is our _____ Father.

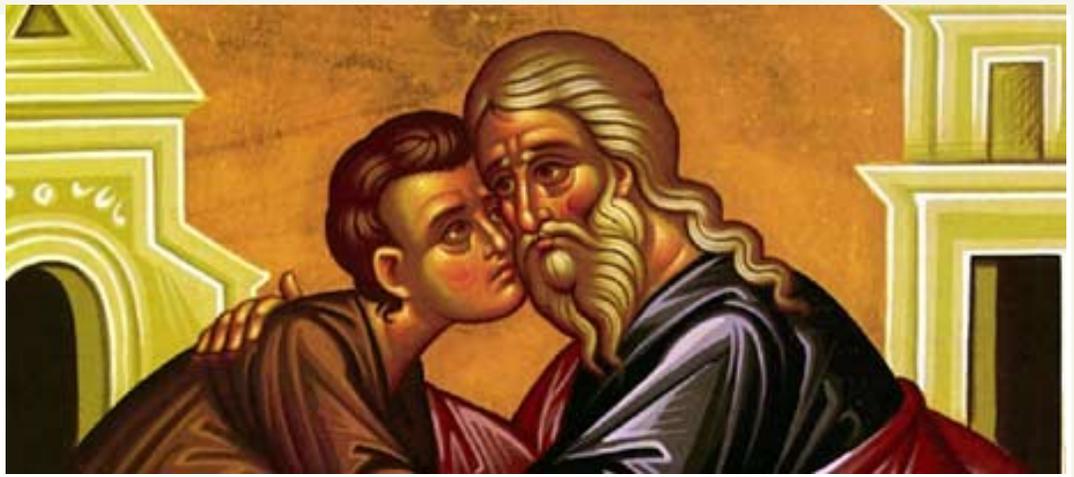
Down

1. "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is ____."
2. The parable of the Prodigal Son is an icon of _____.
3. When we sin, we put ourselves in _____, just like the Prodigal Son.
4. After the Prodigal Son "came to himself"...He took action by saying, "I will _____ and go to my father"
5. As a result of sin in our lives, we lose the joy of _____ with God.

Announcements: If you have yet to have your home blessed please make arrangements with Fr. Matthew as soon as possible!

- **Archpastoral Visit from Bishop Gregory and Parish Meeting Today!**
- If you have yet to do so, please turn in your pledge card for 2018. Even if you are unsure what you may be able to give, please just fill out your name and turn in the card. If you have any questions about Stewardship at St. Elizabeth's please see Fr. Matthew.
- No Sunday School Today:. On Sunday February 11th and 18th the St. Elizabeth Youth will be working on making their own Icons to carry in procession and have blessed for the Sunday of Orthodoxy on February 25th.
- **To all the Women:** you are invited to take part in a weekly online study dedicated to bearing witness to the lives of Orthodox women Saints. This will be an informal and relaxed time for fellowship and bonding through storytelling. During each meeting, we will spend time in prayer and share the life story of two Saints. Wherever your are in your journey with Christ, you are invited to join us Thursdays from 8:30 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. Email Alexandra Cathey, who attends St. Elizabeth's Orthodox Church in Woodstock, Ga, at alexandra.paxcaritas@gmail.com if you have any questions or would like to join the "Our Holy Mothers" study group.
- Starting in February St. Elizabeth's will be forming a book club. Once a month we will meet up during the week, or be able to skype in, to discuss a book on Orthodoxy. Our first meeting has been switched to Monday February 12th at 7:30pm. The Book we will be reading is called "How to Live a Holy Life" by Metropolitan Gregory (Postnikov). You can find it on Amazon at this link. We will start by reading pages 5-20. Please take notes and write down any questions or thoughts you may have so we can discuss them at the first meeting.
- The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony for Chris Peterson and Joy Marino Sunday February 18th .

Today is known in the church as the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Now just two weeks from the beginning of Great Lent, we are reminded today of who we are: beloved children of God who need to come to our senses and return to our loving, forgiving Father. No matter what we have done, no matter how we have diminished ourselves, no



matter how broken we have made our relationship with God, He patiently awaits our return, runs to greet us, and welcomes us back into His family with joy and celebration.

We can be sure that the prodigal son in today's gospel didn't think that his father would react that way to him. After all, he had asked his father for his inheritance, which was like telling the old man that he should drop dead so the son could have his money. The son traveled far away, quickly wasted his money with partying and immorality, ended up as a servant taking care of pigs, and was so hungry that he wished he could eat the pigs' slop.

Then the young man came to himself, realized how miserable his life was, and decided to return home in hopes of becoming a servant to his father. He realized that he had sinned against his father, that he wasn't worthy to be called his son anymore, and wanted only to be a hired hand. No self-respecting father in that time and place could be expected to do more for such a rebellious and disrespectful son. The young man would have been fortunate to have been taken back into the household even as the lowliest servant.

But the father won't hear of it. In a way that must have shocked everyone, he runs to greet his son, embraces and kisses him, gives him fine clothes, slaughters a calf, and throws a big party. The father did not judge, condemn, or reject his son; instead, he rejoices that a beloved child who was lost has returned home, that one who was dead to him has been restored to life.

This story of the prodigal son should shape all the repentance that we do in our lives, whether in Lent or not. For it reminds us Who God is and who we are. As in this parable, there are no limits to our Lord's mercy, no restraints on His compassion or forgiveness. Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ was born, baptized, taught, worked miracles, was crucified and resurrected, and ascended into heaven for our salvation. He came as the Second Adam to restore us as the children of God, to put us in our proper place in the family of heaven as those created in the divine image and likeness.

Despite what some of us may be tempted to believe, the Father is not a harsh, stern, hateful judge who is out to get us. Likewise, the Son did not come to condemn and punish, but to save. We should have no fears about Him rejecting our repentance, no matter what we have done. He accepted and blessed everyone who came to Him in humble repentance during his earthly ministry, including tax-collectors, a woman caught in adultery, Gentiles, the demon-possessed, and His own apostles who denied and abandoned Him. Christ even prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him. His abundant mercy and compassion extend to us and to all who call upon Him from the depths of our hearts.

This story also holds a mirror up to us. It reminds us that, like the prodigal son, we have foolishly rejected our true identity as the beloved children of God. We have chosen our own pride, our own self-centered desires, our habits and preferences, over a healthy relationship with our Heavenly Father. And we have born the consequences of our decisions and actions by making ourselves and others miserable.

St. Paul reminded the Corinthians that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. How horrible, then, for them or us to use our bodies in immoral ways for sexual intimacy outside of marriage. Our bodies are members of Christ and destined for the life of the heaven, and we harm and diminish ourselves when we view them simply as instruments for pleasure. The union of man and woman is for growth in holiness and love through the blessed covenant called marriage, which is an image of the relationship between Christ and the Church in which husband and wife wear the crowns of the Kingdom. When man and woman join their bodies in other ways, they choose their passions over holiness and the glory of their identity as God's children. The misery of disease, broken hearts and families, scarred childhoods, and the horror of abortion are often the results.

This was also the problem of the prodigal son. He abandoned his father in order to make his life one wild party, and ended up in a pig sty so wild with hunger that he envied the food of the swine. And since the Jews considered pigs to be unclean, the Lord makes clear that this fellow had truly hit rock bottom.

No matter what our particular set of temptations may be, we should all admit that we are in the place of the prodigal son. We have not lived faithfully as the sons and daughters of the Lord. We have chosen our own will over God's, we have asked for our inheritance—namely, whatever good things we can get—and then used them however we pleased. In thought, word, and deed, we have often done our best to live as though God is dead, as though He is no longer our Father and we are no longer His children.

Lent is the time set aside in the church calendar to come to our senses, to recognize the truth of what we have done to ourselves, and begin the journey back to the Lord. But we have a major advantage over the prodigal son. We know that our Heavenly Father wants nothing more than to restore us to His family. He wants nothing more than to forgive, heal, and bless us; to return us to our proper dignity as sons and daughters of the Most High.

You see, Lent is not about getting God to change His mind about us; instead, it is about us changing our minds and lives in order to return to God. No amount of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving will alter anything about the Lord; but these tools are useful in helping us see the truth about our sinfulness and in opening our lives to the mercy which Jesus Christ always extends to repentant sinners.

But we have to be careful here. Some of us hear words like "sinfulness" and "repentance" and immediately think of God as harsh, unforgiving, and out to punish us. We may be terrified of God and think that He wants us to be miserable. So we obsess about our failings, judge ourselves as hopeless cases when we aren't perfect, and end up taking the joy out of life.

The good news is that God did not create us for a joyless life of despair, but to share in the blessedness of His life. The eternal Son of God became one of us to heal our broken humanity and bring us into the joy of the Kingdom. We pray, fast, give alms, and forgive our enemies as ways of embracing His healing, of accepting His gracious transformation of our lives.

Like the man in the pig sty, we also need to come to our senses, see the truth about God and ourselves and act accordingly. It is only our own stubborn refusal which holds us back from entering into the joy of the Lord. Let's use this coming Lent to get over that stubbornness, swallow our pride, and return home to a Father who loves us more than we can even imagine. He has sent His only begotten Son to restore us to the dignity of His beloved sons and daughters. This Lent, let us run home to Him.

Article by: March 2, 2013March 23, 2015 · Fr. Philip LeMasters

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/easternchristianinsights/2013/03/02/homily-for-the-sunday-of-the-prodigal-son-in-the-orthodox-church/>