



My Beloved Ones,

As we prepare to enter the second week of the Triodion, most Orthodox Christians are familiar with the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and how it represents our need to turn away from sin as we seek the mercy and love of our Heavenly Father.

Perhaps in this era of live streaming, we can also recognize those who think and act like the unforgiving Elder Son; those who stand by our Heavenly Father & His Holy Church, but do not show the same joy when our brothers and sisters return home to the embrace of our communities.

As Orthodox Christians, we recognize our sinfulness in the Prodigal Son, and our pride in the Elder Son, but we may miss that our journey toward *theosis*—becoming like God—requires that we do our best to show the same joy as our Father.

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul says, *“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal... and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)* St. Luke intends for us to receive comfort from our Lord’s parable of the loving Father, but like last week’s Gospel of the Publican and the Pharisee, we must not fall into prideful thinking of judging our brother, as the Elder Son does here. We know from last the Publican and the Pharisee that all our good works do not justify us, if we cannot show true love to our brothers and sisters. It is the same with the Elder Son, who removes himself from the banquet, because he cannot follow his Father’s kind example.

My beloved, as we continue our preparation for Great Lent, let us be mindful of the importance of welcoming our brothers and sisters, like our Father would do for us. We must learn to soften our hearts by opening our arms, and welcoming home our brothers and sisters.

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