

Message from Fr. George for Friday, February 17, 2023

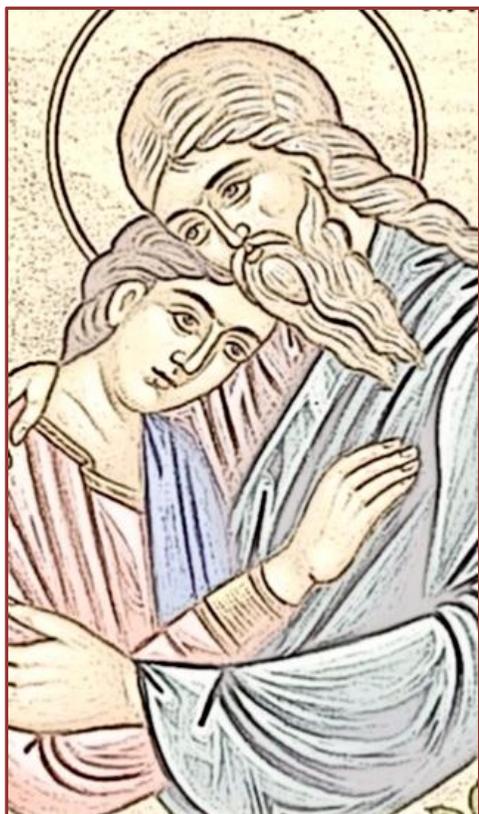
Returning Home



A FATHER'S HUG

Sunday, February 12, 2023, Gospel Lesson

The parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us that sin is a kind of exile, enslavement, and poverty. Repentance is the return from exile to our true home so that we can receive our true inheritance and freedom as members of our Father's household. To repent is not just to feel dissatisfied or ashamed, but to act, to turn around. God will always welcome us as a Father Who forgives, embraces, and kisses us. Saint Athanasios of Alexandria says, "His father neither takes him in like a hired servant nor treats him like a stranger. Oh no, he kisses him as a son. He accepts him as a dead man come back to life again. He counts him worthy of the divine feast and gives him the precious garment he once wore."



In this parable, we learn three main things: what it means to live in sin, what it means to repent, and the greatness of God's love for us. We always remember that no matter how far we have strayed from God, the road back to Him is always open. We can always be encouraged that, no matter what sins we have committed, however serious they might be, God will forgive us if we repent. There is never a point of no return. Regardless of the condition we might be in, when we remember who we truly are – His children – we can walk back to the Father's house. When we

do, He will run to us, forgive us, and embrace us in His love.

[from Archdiocese Department of Religious Education]

Response to Sunday's Sermon...

I really love that icon on the screen and what you said, is that WE are the ones steering our boat, for good or evil. The Lord is standing behind us, suggesting the way we should go, but it is ultimately up to us to go that way. A novel thought.

Honestly, they didn't use your presentation because it was too good. What the heck? I am overwhelmed at their

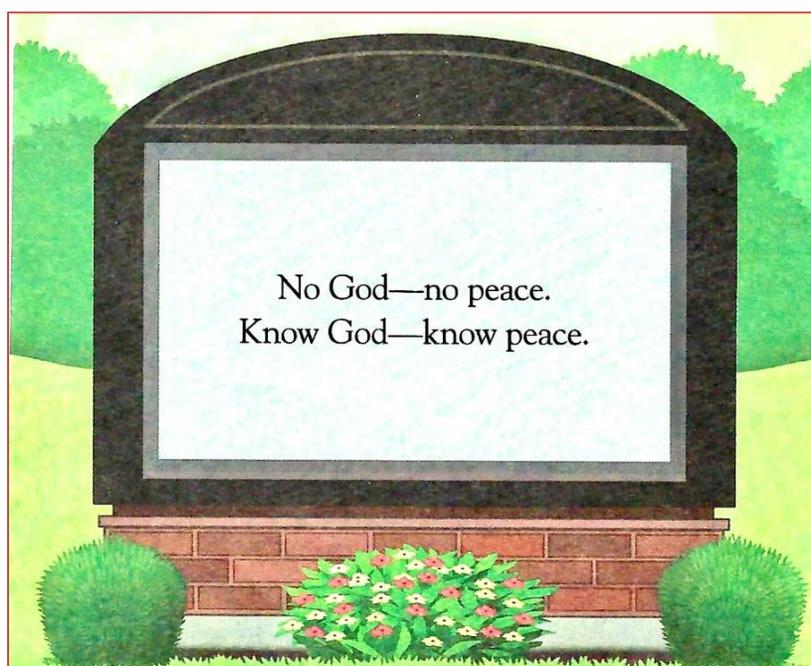
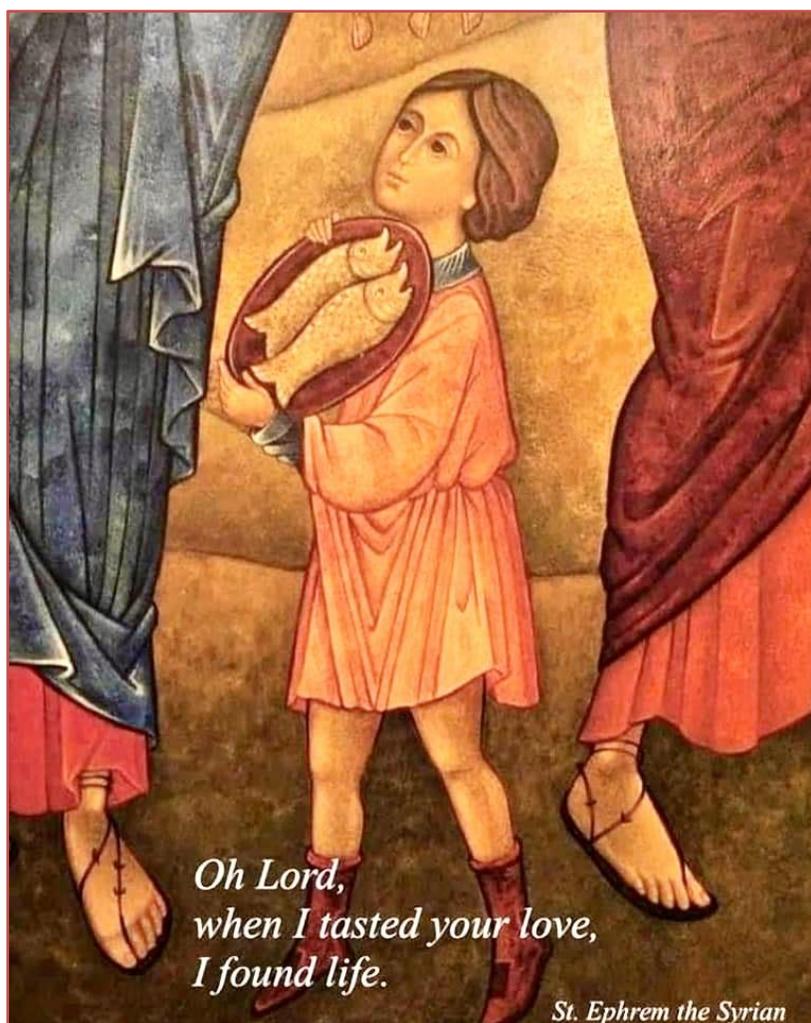
insecurity. They never had any leadership courses, or they would have learned that allowing people to shine in their gifts, makes EVERYONE look good. Again, ah well, good on you for your attitude to keep going!

Great Lent – this is pretty overwhelming to me, that when you were speaking at the end, you made Great Lent sound EXCITING, more than I have ever heard. It was an invitation to experience the Lord, worship Him, renew our relationship, and cleanse ourselves prior to Pascha. Truly exciting and not a drudge, as some people (myself included) have thought of Lent.

Finally, I am excited that you neatly addressed society trying to get us to follow the norms and mores they are trying to stuff down our throats. Now more than ever, we must be grounded in the faith, KNOW who we are in Christ, and be able to make a good account and calmly defend our faith. What the enemy is doing is insidious, but he keeps using the same argument he's used from the beginning "Did God Say?". And our answer as Christians should be "You bet He did!"

[Thanks, Faye for your thoughts and insights. I am grateful for your Spirit-filled witness. – Fr. George]





The son had run back to the father's house, which symbolizes the Church. This reminds us that if we choose to stay out of the Church, we might have what looks like a full and happy life, but at some point, we might realize that our spiritual gifts and riches are decreasing. We will miss the essential part of life: participation in God's love. We always have the choice to return to our Father's house, recognize our weakness, humble ourselves with repentance, and experience grace, joy, and love. The father receives the prodigal not as a servant but as his beloved son, showering gifts on him.

[from Archdiocese Department of Religious Education]



Let us support one another during our Lenten Journey...

Beginning today and continuing throughout Great & Holy Lent, please share with Fr. George a special practice or cherished tradition that you feel will benefit others in our parish family. Perhaps it happened a few years ago, or maybe you and your family plan to do it this year. Names will not be used. By sending, you give Fr. George permission to share your special Lenten practice with our parishioners in future *Weekly* editions.

See next page for a sample submission



In 2021, Fr. George & Presbytera Marinda learned the basics of *Pysanky* – the Ukrainian Pascha tradition of decorating Easter Eggs – from one of our parish families. This year we hope others will want to learn. Let Fr. George know by emailing him about who in your family is interested. He will seek to schedule this opportunity.



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during our Lenten Journey...

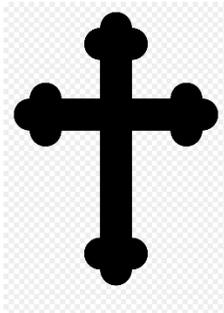
Share Your Lenten Tradition Here

(including photo if possible, but it is not required)

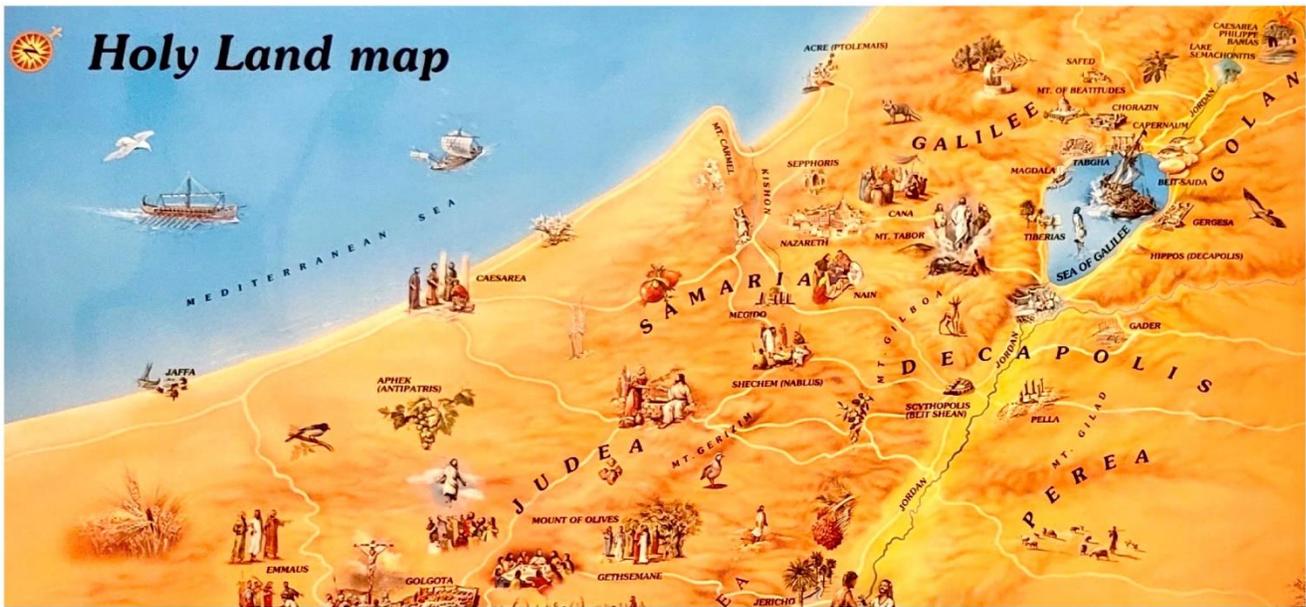


Saturday February 18th

Divine Liturgy & Commemoration of Koliva



Offer Names of your Family & Friends
of blessed memory



Holy Land Pilgrimage



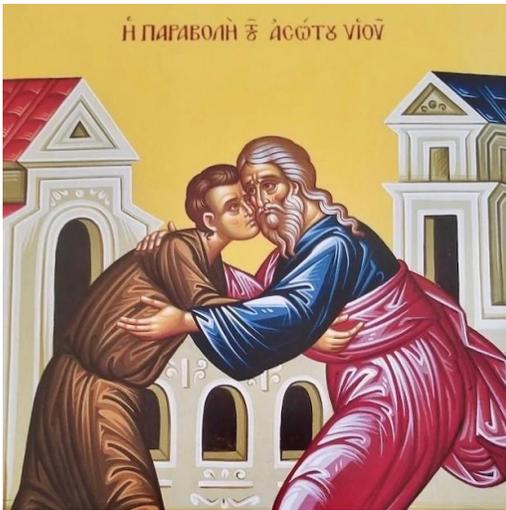
Join us on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of Great Lent as we share photos and stories from our recent trip. Everyone is invited to bring Lenten foods for our community dinners after Salutations Services that begin at 6:00 p.m. Friday programs end at 8:00 p.m. Fr. George will offer brief family videos and discussion on the 1st and 5th Fridays. Please join us with your family.

Fr. George adds the following thoughts from the Brotherhood of Saint George ...με αγάπη (with love)

“I wanna go home”

«θέλω να πάω σπίτι»

to the eternal home Christ came to gift to us



Αγαπητοί μου Χριστιανοί • My Beloved Christians,

Who doesn't want to go home? Ποιός δεν θέλει να γυρίσει σπίτι;

It takes **effort, wisdom, and spiritual/emotional maturity** to pursue one's faith — to pursue *paradise*. And to do so, **in just the right way**, is Christ's and His Church's goal for us.

Full of love, our Lord, God, and Savior, the Second person of the Holy Trinity, the Only-begotten Son and Logos of the Father **has gifted all mankind** with the

immeasurably beautiful and didactic story of *the Prodigal son* (την παραβολή του Ασώτου γιού): see Luke 15:11-32.

God awaits each of us — *His children*, allowing the many lessons of this temporary life; *personal and collective*. *We are neither arrogant nor proud to be in the Church — we are merely grateful.*

NOTE: no need here for a history lesson; suffice it to say, that we know that the departures away from the Ecclesia/from Orthodoxy, were/are always fueled by the devil; who seeks to lead all of God's children astray — through egotism: like the prodigal son ...and through envy: like the elder brother. All of Satan's schemes are thwarted by our Savior's parable depicting the All-compassionate Father: God, Who welcomes ALL to ONENESS with Him, through repentance.

Good people, *with Panaghia's help take heed!*strive, through the gifts of the Church (*prayer, fasting, and good deeds — which lead to Holy Communion & Holy Confession*) to return to God — daily.

The blessed opportunity of Great and Holy Lent is a gift. Let us receive it gladly — and as the Fathers of Church adjure us:

- *Να μην πορνεύετε • flee from pornography (etc.)*
- *Να μην κρεοφαγείτε • avoid eating meat (etc.)*
- *Να πείτε συνεχώς την ευχή (του Ιησού) • ceaselessly say the prayer (of Jesus)*

Encouraging all, in Christ's love — I remain yours, +Christódoulos, Priest-Monk

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Announces Earthquake Relief Fund



[Donate Now](https://www.goarch.org/earthquake)

New York - His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America announces the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Earthquake Relief Fund, a fundraising effort by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America to provide humanitarian aid to the victims of the recent earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria.

Yesterday, February 8, His Eminence visited the Turkish Consulate General in New York in order to sign its book of condolences. He met with Consul General Reyhan Özgür, to whom he expressed his deepest sympathies for the victims of the tragedy and shared his prayers for the rescue missions still underway as casualties continue to rise. They also discussed ways to work with local humanitarian services to respond to the urgent needs of all those affected by the earthquake.

His Eminence also visited the Very Reverend Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, where he expressed his sadness at the loss of life and the damage to the Armenian churches in both Syria and Türkiye. Today, the Archbishop plans to meet with His Eminence Mor Dionysius John Kawak, Archbishop of

the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch and Archdiocese for the Eastern United States, to offer solidarity and prayers for the destruction and loss brought on by these tragic earthquakes.

Archbishop Elpidophoros said, "In initiating the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Earthquake Relief Fund, the focus of our Archdiocese is to help with both the immediate needs and the longer-term implications of the devastation from the deadly earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria. Our Archdiocese will partner with International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) to identify trusted organizations for aid distribution."

A long-standing and trusted partner, IOCC has a proven track record in humanitarian and emergency relief and will lend its logistical and on-the-ground expertise to ensure effective distribution of funds raised by the Archdiocese. Distribution will be directed primarily to those impacted by the earthquake in Türkiye, and, as opportunities to assist are identified, to Syria.

The Archdiocese has set an initial fundraising goal of \$500,000.

Donations can be made online at the dedicated webpage for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Earthquake Relief Fund: <https://www.goarch.org/earthquake>. Checks may also be sent to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, 8 E. 79th St., New York, NY 10075, and made payable to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese with a memo notation of "Earthquake Relief Fund."

The National Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, an affiliated institution, has committed to an initial disbursement of \$50,000 for the Fund and will launch a fundraising campaign through its chapters to benefit the earthquake victims. The Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Fund is also committed to providing support to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Earthquake Relief Fund. At the same time, the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America is directly supporting the relief efforts of IOCC. At the request of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, the Order of St. Andrew, Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and Mr. John Catsimatidis, Vice Chair of the Archdiocesan Council, have each pledged \$50,000 to be donated to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople for distribution to those affected in Türkiye.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America invites all parishes and faithful to support the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Earthquake Relief Fund.