

Parish Prayer List (Living)

Metropolitan Nicholas	Sharon	Bob	Reader Mark
Andrea	Amanda	Sherry	Joretta
Fr. Michael	Barry	Sean	Kristi
James	Nicholas B.	Karin	Andrea & Kirby
Nanette	Michael	Tatiana	Rachael
Michael	Helen	Susan K	Bob Wedder
Anna	Erin and baby	Sandy	

Parish Prayer List (Fallen Asleep)

Francis Dreyer (+2/1)	Ia (Edith) Glogg (+2/17)
Kristi Cornwell	John Beach (+2/27)

Thoughts from the Fathers

“Where is your brother Abel?” Beyond all limit is God’s longsuffering: He asks the question not because He was ignorant, but because He had done the same in his father’s case....so now too he asks Cain in these words, “Where is your brother Abel?” The loving Lord pretends ignorance so that by means of the question he may cause the man guilty of these sins to be brought to confession of his guilt and to be in a position to win pardon, perhaps, and love.

Saint John Chrysostom, “Homily 19 on Genesis”

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At first...grace visits you softly, but when, as you pray, you feel a fiery moment of ineffable joy sweep through you heart, and when on your knees you feel an inexplicable affection in your soul and an imperative need to weep, know then that the grace of Christ is visiting you. Persevere, my friend, and grace will come more and more often, until it lives in you permanently. You will then know a continuous state of grace, and the inner peace whose source is the forgiveness of Christ will transform itself into spiritual joy which will invisibly radiate through every pore of your being. You will know the happiness of being forgiven and of forgiving.

Father George Calciu, “Homily on Forgiveness,” Father George Calciu: Interviews, Homilies, and Talks

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On the Sunday of Zacchaeus

Homily by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh
13th February, 2001

Last week we have entered into the several weeks on our way to the day of the Resurrection, when we are told to examine ourselves; then a time will come to think of nothing but the ways of God preparing us for salvation; and when we reach Holy Week, then we should have no thought, anything but the Lord Whose passion we will be contemplating before we enter together with Him into the glory and the joy of His Resurrection.

Last week we read the Gospel of the Blind man of Jericho; it challenges us directly; we all contend that we see; we all contend that we are not blind, and yet is not the way in which we see another form of blindness? Are we not blinded by the visible to the invisible, are we not blinded by prejudice against truth, are we not blinded by passion against reality? And so, each of us has got to ask himself whether what he sees is the reality of things, and if not, turn to God asking Him to give us an insight. And one of the things that blinds us most hopelessly is vanity that makes us accept for true all the lies we may hear or observe which boost our self-respect, which make us reject everything which is criticism or condemnation of us.

Today's Gospel is about vanity and about the way in which it can be overcome, indeed about the condition and the cost of it. Zacchaeus was a rich man, a man, known in his town, a man whom everyone would recognise; he was a man of unrighteous ways, and yet something stirred within him when he heard of Christ and he wanted to see Him. It probably was to a certain extent the desire to see the New Prophet of Israel, but this would not have been enough to prompt him to do what he did. In the crowd, because he was too small of stature, he climbs into a tree; sure, he was surrounded with laughter, with mockery and yet, he so wanted to see Christ, it mattered so much to him to see Him that he was prepared to be mocked, laughed at rather than let Him pass by. And in all this crowd through which Christ was passing Christ saw only one man: Zacchaeus, and He called him down, and He went to stay with him.

Vanity is that condition of our soul, that miserable condition of our soul, in which we are afraid of human judgment, in which we derive our sense of worth from the judgment of those who surround us, and indeed it is vanity, because the things for which we are praised are vain, empty, unworthy of the greatness of man. And also, for praise we do not turn to those people capable of a sound and at times severe judgment; we turn to the peoples who are ready to offer us the praises which we want. This makes these praises doubly vain, its substance is naught, and the people from whom we receive it are also empty, in our own eyes, until they speak of us good. St John Climacus says that vanity is the attitude of one who is afraid of men and is arrogant before the face of God, who thinks God's judgment matters little, provided that he has the approval of those who surround him.

Is that not a true description of the way in which we stand in life, in the way in which we are prepared to forget the judgment of God provided we feel supported by the judgment of men? And what is the way then? Zacchaeus shows us one way: care nothing about the judgment of men because the judgment of God, the presence of God, or perhaps the judgment of one who will not praise us but is a person of integrity and of truth matters more. Zacchaeus did not know Whom Christ was and that He was the Son of God become the Son of man, but he knew that Christ was a man of integrity and he wanted to see Him, to meet Him face to face.

But then there are also two other ways of shaking off the fear of man, this dependence upon human's judgment at the cost of our own wholeness. St John Climacus says to us that the way to get rid of vanity is humility; St Isaac of Syria strangely says the way is also pride, and both are true, only that the one will give us life and the other will give us death. If we choose the way of pride we will assert ourselves arrogantly, not only in the face of men, but also in the face of God; our own judgment shall be the only thing that shall count, and then we will find death at the end of the road. The way of humility is that of bowing before the judgment of God. If we are incapable of soaring Godwards, lie before Him like the parched earth is before the face of the sky, abandoned, helpless, thirsty, hungry, longing, desperate not to be able to achieve what we wish to achieve, this is the beginning of humility.

But even that may be too much for us, even that may be too difficult for us because we are not used to let go, to abandon ourselves, offer ourselves to an act of God. Then we can begin to overcome vanity by gratitude. Whenever we discover that there is in us a moment of vanity, let us ask ourselves: why? Very often, it is because we have, inadvertently quite often, said the right thing, or inadvertently done the right thing; we can then turn to God and thank Him that He gave us the opportunity, that He gave us eyes to see the need, ears to hear a cry, a mind to understand, a heart to respond, good will to bring us into motion and the mean to do the right thing. Is not that reasons enough for us to be grateful, do we not know, all of us, from experience that it is not the need that will call out of us always, inevitably the right response? How often there is a need and our heart is parched, and cold, and indifferent? How often someone cries for help and we understand nothing, how often our heart has been stirred and our mind began to understand, but we are not used to compel ourselves and our will wavers, and wavers too long, until it is too late. And we could go on describing our condition in many more details.

Let us learn first of all to be grateful that God gives us the possibility to do right instead of preening ourselves and be proud of the fact that for once we have done what should be natural to us always, and then gradually we may outgrow even that level and still remaining grateful, still remaining amazed at God's goodness we may then learn to be humble in a way in which no one knows, not declaring that we are unworthy, but in adoration of God's greatness, in veneration of other people, in the readiness to forget ourselves completely for the sake of God, for the sake of any person who meets us and challenges us to be compassionate, to be loving, to be understanding, and the blindness might fall of our eyes, vanity will leave us free at least for a moment and we will be able to face ourselves and to face God and others as the Publican did when he entered into the Temple, and did not dare into it because it was the place of holiness where God abides, the place where he thought only the worthy ones can come and we will be accepted by God because of this recognition of His holiness and the reverence, with which we will treat Him and our neighbour. Amen.