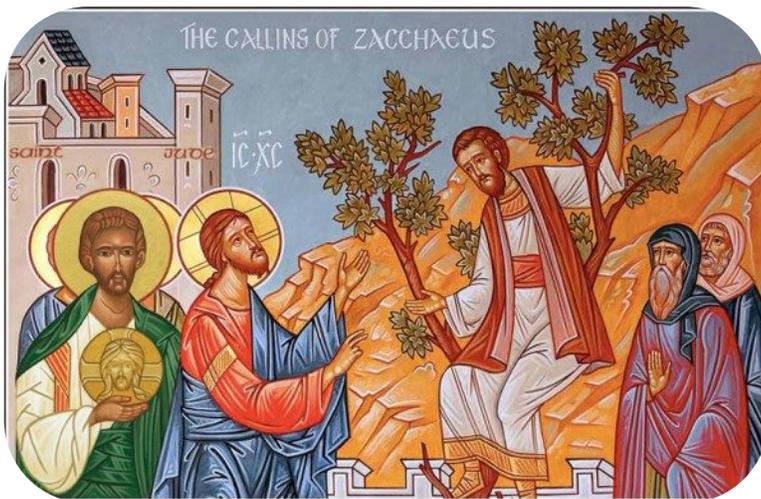


ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER

Preparing For The Great Lent

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us! Amen!



The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is also preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning.

The Sunday of Zacchaeus is the Sunday before the Triodion begins. It is read at this point in the liturgical year, immediately before Great Lent, to

teach that one should turn away from sins. In this way the Lenten journey should begin with recognition of sinfulness, just as Zacchaeus recognized his sins. Just as Zacchaeus "sought to see who Jesus was" (Luke 19:3), that same desire and effort to see Jesus starts the movement through Lent towards Pascha. It is the first movement of salvation.

HOLIDAYS & SAINTS DAYS

February 2

Meeting Of Christ

February 3

Righteous God-bearer Simeon and Anna the Prophetess

February 8

Greatmartyr Theodore Stratelates

February 10

Zacchaeus Sunday

February 17

Publican and Pharisee.
Beginning of Lenten Triodion

February 24

Sunday of Prodigal Son. 1st and 2nd Finding of the Honorable Head of St. John the Baptist

February 27

St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn

St. Leo the Great (February 18): *Lent the Season of Purification*

"As we are therefore beginning this sacred season, dedicated to the purification of the soul, let us be careful to fulfill the Apostolic command that we cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit (II Cor. 7:11), so that restraining the conflict that exists between the one and the other substance, the soul, which in the Providence of God is meant to be the ruler of the body, may regain the dignity of its rightful authority, so that, giving offense to no man, we may not incur the contumely

of evil mongers. With just contempt shall we be tormented by those who have no faith, and from our wickedness evil tongues will draw weapons to wound religion, if the way of life of those who fast be not in accord with what is needed in true self-denial. For the sum total of our fasting does not consist in merely abstaining from food. In vain do we deny our body food if we do not withhold our heart from iniquity, and restrain our lips that they speak no evil."

To Suffer For Doing Right: The Greatmartyr Theodore Stratelates

On February 8, the Church celebrates the memory of the Greatmartyr Theodore Stratelates, whose title is often translated as "commander" or "general."

Theodore was one of those multi-gifted people who attract both admiration and jealousy. He was a brave soldier, and at the same time he was an articulate Christian who convinced many to join him in the faith. Several icons of Theodore depict an unusually handsome face with strong features.

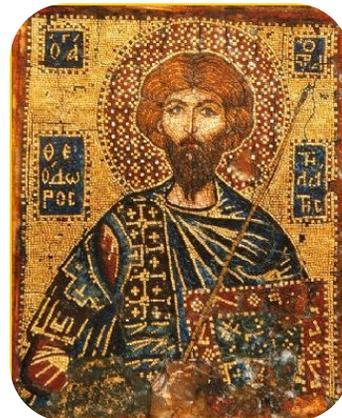
The pagan emperor Licinius was well aware of his military commander's qualities, and those qualities worried him. He didn't want an enemy—and to him Christianity was an enemy—to have such a powerful advocate. So he called Theodore to the imperial court, and invited him to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods.

Theodore came, and asked to take some of the pagan idols home, saying he would return with them the next day to offer sacrifice. What he actually did was to melt down the precious metal they were made of, and then distribute the valuable chunks to the poor.

Theodore would pay dearly for his dedication to Christ. He was tortured and crucified, and when those things miraculously failed to

We remember Theodore as the patron saint of soldiers. But he also fulfilled a Biblical exhortation: "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3: 15b). Theodore gave himself up to the emperor's men, and was heard to say, "Glory to

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Troparion – Tone 4

Truly enlisted with the King of Heaven, / you became an outstanding general for Him, passion-bearer Theodore; / you armed yourself wisely with the weapons of faith / and conquered hordes of demons, revealing yourself as a victorious athlete. / Therefore, in faith we always call you blessed.

Kontakion – Tone 2

With the word of God as a spear in your hand, / in courage of soul and armed with faith, / you vanquished the enemy, Theodore, glory of martyrs, / with whom you unceasingly pray to Christ God for us all.

The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian *By Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann*



The special Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim is very brief and concise, but in the words of this prayer the meaning and purpose of Great Lent are revealed to us in great depth.

Of all Lenten hymns and prayers, one short prayer can be termed the Lenten prayer. Tradition ascribes it to one of the great teachers of spiritual life - St. Ephraim the Syrian. Here is its text: O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother; For Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen This prayer is read twice at the end of each Lenten service Monday through Friday (not on Saturdays and Sundays for, as we shall see later, the services of these days do not follow the Lenten pattern). At the first reading, a prostration follows each petition. Then we all bow twelve times saying: "O God, cleanse me a sinner." The entire prayer is repeated with one final prostration at the end.

Continued on page 5

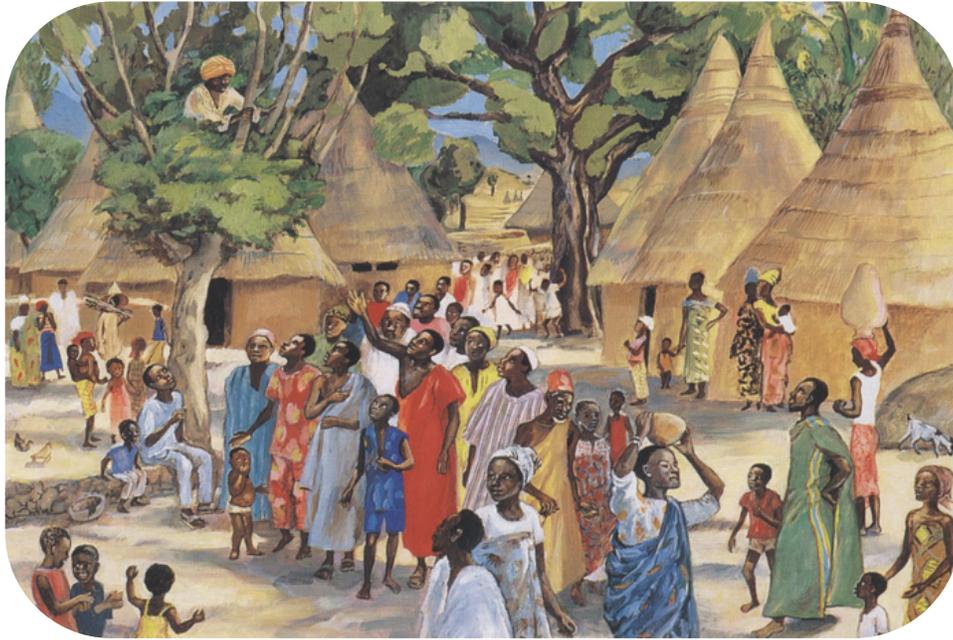


Image of Zacchaeus in Art: *Zaccheus welcomes Jesus, 1973 Artist: Jesus Mafa*

Zacchaeus Sunday

In Orthodox Church, the Gospel account of Zacchaeus is read on the last Sunday preceding the liturgical preparation for Great Lent, for which reason that Sunday is known as "Zacchaeus Sunday." It is the very first commemoration of a new Paschal cycle. The account was chosen to open the Lenten season because of two reasons: Jesus' call to Zacchaeus to come down from the tree (symbolizing the divine call to humility), and Zacchaeus' subsequent repentance.

The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is also preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about Zacchaeus the tax-collector. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man, and how his life was changed simply because he "sought to see who Jesus was" (Luke 19:3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through Lent towards Pascha. It is the first movement of salvation.

Our Lenten journey begins with recognition of our own sinfulness, just as Zacchaeus recognized his. He promised to make restitution by giving half of his wealth to the poor, and by paying to those he had falsely accused four times as much as they had lost. In this, he went beyond

the requirements of the Law (Ex. 22:3-12).

The example of Zacchaeus teaches us that we should turn away from our sins, and atone for them. The real proof of our sorrow and repentance is not just a verbal apology, but when we correct ourselves and try to make amends for the consequences of our evil actions.

We are also assured of God's mercy and compassion by Christ's words to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation is come to this house" (Luke 19:9). After the Great Doxology at Sunday Matins (when the Tone of the week is Tone 1, 3, 5, 7) we sing the Dismissal Hymn of the Resurrection "Today salvation has come to the world," which echoes the Lord's words to Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus was short, so he climbed a tree in order to see the Lord. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We are also short in our spiritual stature, therefore we must climb the ladder of the virtues. In other words, we must prepare for spiritual effort and growth.

Source: <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2000/02/13/1-sunday-of-zacchaeus>

Reading for Children on page 7

To Suffer For Doing Right (Continued)

God" as he died.

What does it mean in our lives, in our day, to "be prepared to make a defense" of our faith? For one thing, Christians should be ready to challenge public assertions that go against the words of Jesus Christ. One example is a recent book by Deepak Chopra, a well-known advocate of alternative medicine. In 2010 he produced a book called "Muhammad: A Story of the Last Prophet."

For Christians there is only one "last prophet" and that is John, the Baptist and Forerunner. Jesus says, "The law and the prophets were until John" (Matthew 11:13). These words tell us that the Old Testament law and prophecies have been fulfilled in Christ, to whom John was Forerunner. John's own words about Christ, found in John the Evangelist's writings (John 1:26-34), are also fulfilled. Christ has completed all the prophecies, and the time of prophets is done.

Some people say it's fine for everyone to believe as they wish; we can call John the last of the prophets and others can say the last is Muhammad. But calling Muhammad the last means that Islam's claims are true, and those of Christianity are false. This would be a denial of the One who ended all prophecy by fulfilling it, the One who, as Peter further writes, "has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him" (I Peter 3: 22).

Source:

<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2014/02/08/100462-greatmartyr-theodore-stratelates-the-general>

St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn (February 27)

Founder of 30 parishes; magazine publisher; fluent in Arabic, Russian, Greek and English; spiritual father to Orthodox from New York to California and Mexico to Canada: these are partial descriptions of Saint Raphael.

Born in Syria in 1860, Rafla Hawaweeny had to flee to Lebanon with his family to escape persecution of Christians. His parish priest, like many believers in much earlier centuries, was martyred, a victim of the anti-Christian riots that roared through Damascus the year Rafla was born. Though his family was able to return to Syria, Rafla never forgot that the faith is often under attack and must be defended.

The young boy's education was always geared toward the priesthood. At the age of 17, being an excellent student, he was chosen to attend the School of Theology on the island of Halki in Greece. After graduation he returned to Syria and began visiting parishes with the Patriarch. In 1889 he was sent to Moscow, where he was ordained to the priesthood and then given the rank of archimandrite, with the name Raphael.

In 1895, Archimandrite Raphael came to New York at the invitation of the Syrian Orthodox community there. He served New York faithfully, but felt great concern about other Arab Christians in towns and cities across the country who had no pastors and were often drawn to non-Orthodox churches that offered worship in English and the chance to be part of a church community. In 1896, he set out across the country to find and minister to these people. He would sometimes walk around visiting families all day Saturday, then take a long journey by train to another town so that he could perform the Sunday Divine Liturgy there. He preached, taught, performed the sacraments, and with loving firmness encouraged everyone to remain strong in their Orthodox faith.

As leader of the Russian Mission to America, the Russian hierarch was acknowledged as the head of the Church in America and of all the ethnic groups within it; no ethnic jurisdictions as yet existed. In 1903, the hierarch was Bishop Tikhon, who was later to be canonized. Needing help with his growing American flock, Bishop Tikhon asked the Holy Synod of Bishops in Russia to name Archimandrite Raphael as Bishop of Brooklyn, which they did. He became the first Orthodox bishop to be consecrated in America.

In the next years he assisted Bishop Tikhon in administering the Diocese, consecrated the grounds for St. Tikhon's Monastery, and began publishing "The Word" (in Arabic "Al-Kalimat) Magazine to reach the far parishes of the Syro-Arab Mission which he still led. He also continued his pastoral visits, urging the use of English where appropriate, until his death in 1915.

Proverbs 6:6 advises us to "go to the ant" and "consider her ways, and be wise." Saint Raphael had the energy and wisdom that the verse praises. But more important, he had the love for people, whatever their ethnicity, that makes a bishop a true father to his flock.

St. Raphael Hawaweeny Bishop of Brooklyn Commemoration Date: February 29th On November 20, 1860, Rafla Hawaweeny was born in Damascus, Syria. He was baptized in Beirut, Lebanon on the Feast of Theophany, the same day the church celebrates the Baptism of Jesus Christ. As an elementary student, he worked very hard and received very good grades. This helped him to receive a scholarship to study at the School of Theology in Halki Island, Turkey.

(Continued on page 6)

The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim (Continued)

Why does this short and simple prayer occupy such an important position in the entire Lenten worship? Because it enumerates in a unique way all the "negative" and "positive" elements of repentance and constitutes, so to speak, a "check list" for our individual Lenten effort. This effort is aimed first at our liberation from some fundamental spiritual diseases that shape our life and make it virtually impossible for us even to start turning ourselves to God.

The basic disease is sloth. It is that strange laziness and passivity of our entire being which always pushes us "down" rather than "up" -- which constantly convinces us that no change is possible and therefore desirable. It is in fact a deeply rooted cynicism, which to every spiritual challenge responds "what for?" and makes our life one tremendous spiritual waste. It is the root of all sin because it poisons the spiritual energy at its very source.

The result of sloth is faint-heartedness. It is the state of despondency, which all spiritual Fathers considered the greatest danger for the soul. Despondency is the impossibility for man to see anything good or positive; it is the reduction of everything to negativism and pessimism. It is truly a demonic power in us because the Devil is fundamentally a liar. He lies to man about God and about the world; he fills life with darkness and negation. Despondency is the suicide of the soul because when man is possessed by it he is absolutely unable to see the light and to desire it.

Lust of power! Strange as it may seem, it is precisely sloth and despondency that fill our life with lust of power. By vitiating the entire attitude toward life and making it meaningless and empty, they force us to seek compensation in, a radically wrong attitude toward other persons. If my life is not oriented toward God, not aimed at eternal values, it will inevitably become selfish and self-centered and this means that all other beings will become means of my own self-satisfaction. If God is not the Lord and Master of my life, then I become my own lord and master -- the absolute center of my own world, and I begin to evaluate everything in terms of my needs, my ideas, my desires, and my judgments. The lust of power is thus a fundamental depravity in my relationship to other beings, a search for their subordination to me. It is not necessarily expressed in the actual urge to command and to dominate "others." It may result as well in indifference, contempt, lack of interest, consideration, and respect. It is indeed sloth and despondency directed this time at others; it completes spiritual suicide with spiritual murder.

Finally, idle talk. Of all created beings, man alone has been endowed with the gift of speech. All Fathers see in it the very "seal" of the Divine Image in man because God Himself is revealed as Word (John, 1:1). But being the supreme gift, it is by the same token the supreme danger. Being the very expression of man, the means of his self-fulfillment, it is for this very reason the means of his fall and self-destruction, of betrayal and sin. The word saves and the word kills; the word inspires and the word poisons. The word is the means of Truth and it is the means of demonic Lie. Having an ultimate positive power, it has therefore a tremendous negative power. It truly creates positively or negatively. When deviated from its divine origin and purpose, the word becomes idle. It "enforces" sloth, despondency, and lust of power, and transforms life into hell. It becomes the very power of sin.

These four are thus the negative "objects" of repentance. They are the obstacles to be removed. But God alone can remove them. Hence, the first part of the Lenten prayer; this cry from the bottom of human helplessness. Then the prayer moves to the positive aims of repentance that also are four.

Chastity! If one does not reduce this term, as is so often and erroneously done, only to its sexual connotations, it is understood as the positive counterpart of sloth. The exact and full translation of the Greek *sofrosini* and the Russian *tselomudryie* ought to be whole-mindedness. Sloth is, first of all, dissipation, the brokenness of our vision and energy, the inability to see the whole. Its opposite then is precisely wholeness. If we usually mean by chastity the virtue opposed to sexual depravity, it is because the broken character of our existence is nowhere better manifested than in sexual lust -- the alienation of the body from the life and control of the spirit. Christ restores wholeness in us and He does so by restoring in us the true scale of values by leading us back to God.

The first and wonderful fruit of this wholeness or chastity is humility. We already spoke of it. It is above everything else the victory of truth in us, the elimination of all lies in which we usually live. Humility alone is capable of truth, of seeing and accepting things as they are and therefore of seeing God's majesty and goodness and love in everything. This is why we are told that God gives grace to the humble and resists the proud.

Chastity and humility are naturally followed by patience. The "natural" or "fallen" man is impatient, for being blind to himself he is quick to judge and to condemn others. Having but a broken, incomplete, and distorted knowledge of everything, he measures all things by his tastes and his ideas. Being indifferent to everyone except himself, he wants life to be successful right here and now.

The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim *by Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann* (Continued)

Patience, however, is truly a divine virtue. God is patient not because He is "indulgent," but because He sees the depth of all that exists, because the inner reality of things, which in our blindness we do not see, is open to Him. The closer we come to God, the more patient we grow and the more we reflect that infinite respect for all beings which is the proper quality of God.

Finally, the crown and fruit of all virtues, of all growth and effort, is love -- that love which, as we have already said, can be given by God alone--the gift which is the goal of all spiritual preparation and practice.

All this is summarized and brought together in the concluding petition of the Lenten prayer in which we ask "to see my own errors and not to judge my brother." For ultimately there is but one danger: pride. Pride is the source of evil, and all evil is pride. Yet it is not enough for me to see my own errors, for even this apparent virtue can be turned into pride. Spiritual writings are full of warnings against the subtle forms of pseudo-piety that, in reality, under the cover of humility and self-accusation can lead to a truly demonic pride. But when we "see our own errors" and "do not judge our brothers," when, in other terms, chastity, humility, patience, and love are but one in us, then and only then the ultimate enemy--pride--will be destroyed in us.

St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn (Continued)

After Rafael was ordained a deacon on December 8, 1885, he wanted to learn even more about the church, so he continued his studies at the Theological Academy in Kiev, Ukraine. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1889. Six years after his ordination, he arrived in Brooklyn, New York. In the summer of 1896, he began traveling across the United States.

While traveling 3,000 miles between New York and California, he visited people in thirty different cities. At each place he visited, he talked about God. During the visits, he also performed many Sacraments of the church.

After each petition of the prayer we make a prostration. Prostrations are not limited to the Prayer of St. Ephraim but constitute one of the distinctive characteristics of the entire Lenten worship. Here, however, their meaning is disclosed best of all. In the long and difficult effort of spiritual recovery, the Church does not separate the soul from the body. The whole man has fallen away from God; the whole man is to be restored, the whole man is to return. The catastrophe of sin lies precisely in the victory of the flesh -- the animal, the irrational, and the lust in us -- over the spiritual and the divine. But the body is glorious; the body is holy, so holy that God Himself "became flesh." Salvation and repentance then are not contempt for the body or neglect of it, but restoration of the body to its real function as the expression and the life of spirit, as the temple of the priceless human soul. Christian asceticism is a fight, not against but for the body. For this reason, the whole man - soul and body - repents. The body participates in the prayer of the soul just as the soul prays through and in the body. Prostrations, the "psycho-somatic" sign of repentance and humility, of adoration and obedience, are thus the Lenten rite par excellence.

Source:

http://www.sv-luka.org/misionar/lentenpr_n2.htm

In 1904, on the third Sunday of Great Lent, the Sunday of the Cross, Saint Raphael became the very first Orthodox bishop to be consecrated in North America.

Both Archbishop Tikhon of Moscow (St. Tikhon) and Bishop Innocent performed the consecration of the new Bishop in New York City. Bishop Raphael thought it was very important for children to learn about the church and he established evening schools for children. In order for church services and church books to be easier to understand, St. Raphael believed English should be the language used in those books.

While he served as Auxiliary Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church in America, he helped establish thirty

The elders-anchorites and ever-sinless maidens,

To fly with their right hearts to the precincts of Heavens,

To make it strong enough in earthly storms and fight,

Composed many prayers to recite.

But not a single pray for me is so dear

As one which from a priest we often blessed to hear

In so mournful, so solemn days of Lent.

This prayer very oft on lips of mine is set,
And fallen me provides with strengths I'd never known:

"Oh, Lord of all my days! The ghost of idleness low

And sensuality - this cunning snake and hard -

And empty talk - don't pass into my heart.

But help me, Lord, to see my own sins' procession,

Let ne'er brother of mine receive my condemnation,

And let the air of patience, meekness, love

And blessed chastity in my heart turn alive.

Alexander Pushkin, 1836

parishes across the country and in July of 1905 he blessed the land on which St. Tikhon's Monastery is located. On February 27, 1915, at the age of 55, St. Raphael died. In 1989, his relics were taken to the Antiochian Village in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. In March 2000, the Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America canonized St. Raphael.

Troparion - Tone 1

Your proclamation has gone forth throughout North America, calling the scattered sheep into the unity of the church.

hearing your voice, they responded to your teaching,

and through your writings you instructed them in piety.

now guided by your example, O Father Raphael,

we sing hymns of praise unto Christ our God.

Glory to Him Who gave you strength!
Glory to Him Who granted you a crown!
Glory to Him Who, through you, grants healing to all!

For Children: The Story Of Zacchaeus

Today's story is about a man many people didn't like. They called him a sinner, which is funny because aren't we all sinners? Don't we all make mistakes and do things we shouldn't?

The story starts with Jesus entering a place called Jericho. These days Jesus had been going around telling parables and performing many miracles. The word was spreading about this man named Jesus and the amazing things he was doing and saying. So it was common when Jesus came to a place people would rush to see him. Just imagine if a famous person came walking into your town or down your street. People would be telling their friends and very quickly there would be a large crowd around them. This is how it was for Jesus. In this town that Jesus was entering lived a man named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in this place and had lots of money.

If you've heard the word taxes before its probably not because people like them. Everyone that works pays taxes to the government or the people that run the city and country you live in. In some countries taxes help pay for doctor visits or to make or fix roads, pay for parks, or help those who can't work. Taxes for the most part help us live better so they really are a good thing, the problem is that sometimes (and that includes the times in the Bible) people who got the tax money didn't always spend it properly or they took some of the money for themselves (which is stealing). So the people from Jericho didn't like Zacchaeus very much, especially because he had lots of money and a big house. They figured he had taken some of the tax money for himself.

Back to the story. Zacchaeus had heard a commotion and soon realized that Jesus was in Jericho, so he rushed like everyone else to see Him. When he got to the crowd he couldn't see anything. He figured Jesus was in the middle of it somewhere but standing on his tiptoes he still couldn't even see Jesus.

You probably know what its like to be shorter than all the adults around. Well, Zacchaeus wasn't very tall for a grown-up and couldn't ask someone to pick him up to see better, that would've been silly! So Zacchaeus saw a sycamore tree in the corner of his eye and decided to climb it so he could see Jesus. I just wonder if Zacchaeus thought it might be strange for a grown man to climb a tree? Especially since he was an important person in government. Whatever he thought he did it anyway and didn't seem to care.

When Jesus reached the spot Zacchaeus was he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down right away and welcomed him gladly. This is so cool! First, Jesus knew Zacchaeus' name without asking him first. Second, Jesus didn't care that other people didn't like Zacchaeus, he wanted to visit with him at his house anyway. Third, Jesus said that he MUST stay at his house today. This means that Jesus knew that God wanted him to go there and Jesus obeyed. Jesus asked to go to Zacchaeus' house in front of everyone and as soon as they heard this they all started talking among themselves. They were shaking their heads and saying "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'"

I'm sure they both knew what people were saying but Zacchaeus jumped out of the tree and said to the lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my money to the poor, and if I have cheated or stole anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." The important part about this is that Zacchaeus had a change of heart. I don't know if he was already thinking about repaying people back or he just knew what he should do when he saw and talked to Jesus. He also said that he would pay back people four times the amount. So if he owed someone one dollar he would pay them back four extra dollars! Zacchaeus didn't have to do this but he wanted to make things more than right. When Jesus heard this he said, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Jesus meant that he had forgiven his sins and that even though people didn't think Zacchaeus was good, God loved him too and knew that his heart was good.

Then the very last part Jesus said that he came to seek and to save the lost. This was the whole point as to why God sent His son Jesus to come to earth. To find those who didn't know God and were lost and to show them who God is so they could live forever in Heaven with Him.



Crafts for Children in February: An Icon Letter! by *Presbytera Eleni*

This idea came to me while looking at all the wonderful family photo letters people have made on Pinterest. It popped into my head and I ran with it. We have made these for baptisms for some special little ones. But as I think about it, it would make a great craft for church school and retreats. It can be a wonderful way to learn about icons and each child's Saint.

The process requires downloading pictures of your icons and printing them out. We used regular printer paper and it worked just fine. I made duplicates on my processing page and made them different sizes. Then print them out, cut them out and go to town with the mod podge. We do both sides and once it's all dry, glue a small hanger bracket to the back. It is a fun activity, where we spend some time together and have some nice talks about the Saints and Icons too!



<https://fieldsofbasil.blogspot.com/2014/03/icon-letter-craft.html>

Repentance and Forgiveness: Discussion Questions for Group Activity

Group 1 (Pre-Kindergarten - Grade 1)

How do you feel when you did something you should not have done?

When do you say, I'm sorry?

For what should we say, I'm sorry to God?

Group 2 (Grade 2)

Give each student an opportunity to respond.

When would you say, "I'm sorry", to God?

For what actions?

How do ask for forgiveness from God?

What is the priest's role when going to confession?

Group 3 (Grades 3 & 4)

For what things should we ask forgiveness?

How do we ask for forgiveness from God?

What is the priest's role when we ask for forgiveness?

How does God show that He has forgiven us?

Group 4 (Grades 5 & 6)

Focus on one or two questions. Only if time permit should you go on.

We speak of repentance. What is repentance and for what do we repent?

In the prayer before Communion we pray, "Therefore, I pray have mercy upon me and forgive my transgression both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, committed knowingly and unknowingly, of knowledge and of ignorance."

What are sins of word and of deed?

How does God show that He has forgiven us?

Group 5 (Grades 7 & 8)

Select one question for discussion.

In the prayer before Communion we pray, "Therefore, I pray have mercy upon me and forgive my transgression both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, committed knowingly and unknowingly, of knowledge and of ignorance."

What are transgressions? How would we sin involuntarily?

We speak of repentance. What is repentance and why do we repent?

How do we prepare for confession, for asking God to forgive us?

Group 6 (Grades 9 & 10)

Select one question for discussion.

In the prayer before Communion we pray, "Therefore, I pray have mercy upon me and forgive my transgression both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, committed knowingly and unknowingly, of knowledge and of ignorance."

How would we sin involuntarily? What would a sin of ignorance be?

What is "repentance" and "forgiveness"? Why do we ask for forgiveness from God?

How would we show that we want to repent?

Do you find it difficult to go to confession to ask for forgiveness from God? Why/why not?

Groups 7 & 8 (Young Adults, Adults & Seniors)

Select one question for discussion.

In the prayer before Communion we pray, "Therefore, I pray have mercy upon me and forgive my transgression both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, committed knowingly and unknowingly, of knowledge and of ignorance."

How would we sin unknowingly? What would a sin of ignorance be?

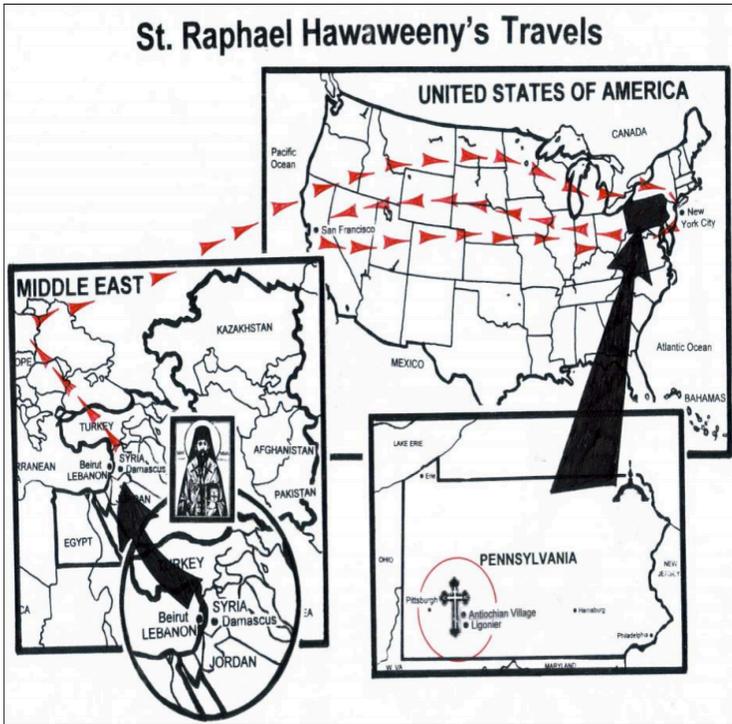
What is "forgiveness"? Why do we ask God for it?

How should we prepare ourselves for confession, for asking God to forgive us?

Do you find it difficult to ask for forgiveness from God? Why or why not?

Source: Holy Trinity Orthodox Church ~ Parma, OH

Activities for Children



Coloring Puzzle

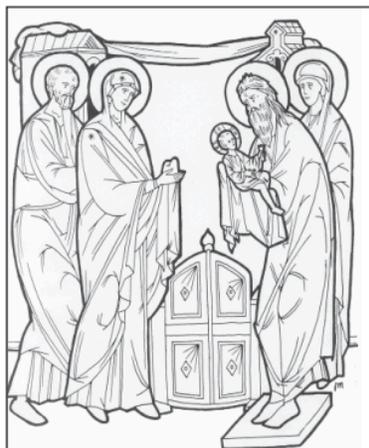
St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn

Color red all the blocks that have an odd number (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19). After all of the odd blocks have been colored, fill in the spaces with the remaining letters, in order, to reveal the message.

3	2	5	1	8	11	2	7	11	8
G	H	Y	M	O	A	L	W	H	Y
14	3	4	9	16	13	12	1	6	12
F	A	A	M	T	E	H	D	E	R
7	8	1	2	6	17	18	20	6	12
S	R	E	A	P	C	H	A	E	L
19	7	5	14	9	5	6	13	4	4
A	Z	J	P	H	E	R	L	A	Y
5	10	3	7	1	4	9	11	5	13
B	T	R	V	X	O	O	A	D	V
6	10	1	15	16	9	8	13	2	4
C	H	W	P	R	N	I	C	S	T
9	3	17	19	18	9	4	5	15	10
L	R	Y	B	O	X	U	A	A	R
7	3	9	4	1	8	11	3	9	20
Z	K	J	G	V	O	A	S	U	D
6	7	5	7	11	12	3	6	11	5
F	P	J	J	S	O	L	R	R	Z
15	19	8	17	3	5	4	15	5	9
Y	H	U	I	O	U	S	F	W	M

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, full of grace; for from thee arose the Sun of justice, Christ our God, lighting those who are in darkness. Rejoice and be glad, O righteous old man, carrying in thine arms the Deliverer of our souls, who granteth us resurrection.

Troparion



Entrance of Our Lord into the Temple
February 2 / 15

Forty days after His birth, Jesus was presented to the Temple as was the custom. Joseph and Mary offered two young pigeons as a sacrifice. Simeon and Anna were prophets in the temple at Jerusalem. Simeon represents all that is good in the Old Testament. He was promised that he would not see death until he beheld the anointed of the Lord (Luke 2:26). Anna is shown in the icon as well. Joseph holds the offering, and Mary is handing the child to Simeon. Simeon holds the child as if on a throne. The hymn, "Now, O Master, You can dismiss Your servant in peace," is taken from the words of Simeon. The event calls us to discover our Lord as the awaited Messiah, and to accept Him as Savior.