



# The Shepherd

ISSUE 189 • FEBRUARY 2012

The official newsletter publication  
for the parish of Saint Spyridon  
Greek Orthodox Church of San Diego



## IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE DESK OF FR. ANDREW . p. 1

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARISH  
COUNCIL ..... p. 2

DIVINE SERVICES AND  
HOLY SACRAMENTS ..... p. 3

NEWS FROM THE LOFT, SENIORS, THE  
GOOD SAMARITANS, WOMEN OF THE  
WORD ..... p. 4

O.C.M.C. .... p. 5

SUNDAY SCHOOL,  
G.O.Y.A. NEWS ..... p. 6

SCHOLARSHIPS ..... p. 7

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS ..... p. 8

EPIPHANY PHOTOS ..... p. 10

FOCUS ..... p. 12

SCOUT SUNDAY ..... p. 13

STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES ..... p. 14

CALENDAR ..... p. 15

CONTACT INFORMATION ..... p. 16

## FROM THE DESK OF FATHER ANDREW



*My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

By the time you receive this month's Newsletter, the Church, you and I, will have begun the *Triodion Period* (Sunday, February 5, 2012). The Gospel lesson for that Sunday comes to us from the Gospel of Saint Luke 18:10-14 and is called *The Sunday of the Tax-Collector and the Pharisee*. The last words we will hear from that Gospel lesson are *"he who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* In

other words, he who has the courage and the fortitude to take a good and honest look at himself, allows himself the opportunity to walk with God in this life, with the hope of becoming truly one with Him in the next. But, to take a good honest look at ourselves can be a scary endeavor and many times we discourage ourselves from taking that step. Because of our pride and self-confidence, we often times deceive ourselves into thinking and feeling that we are O.K. and right with God, much like the attitude of the Pharisee. However, those false perceptions have the ability to lead us further and further away from God. And, so, in fear, which can lead us to self-righteousness, we are not able to humble ourselves before God. And so I ask, "What are we afraid of?" Are we afraid that God will punish us? Are we afraid that God will condemn us? Nothing can be further from the truth, and in the second Gospel lesson (Luke 15:11-32) of the Triodion Period (the Sunday of the Prodigal Son), we have an excellent example of what it means for us to humble ourselves before God, so that we give God the opportunity to exalt us.

The Prodigal Son asked for and received his inheritance from his father. He then left home and we are told that he squandered his life in *loose living*. Dishonorably cut off from his father, the consequence of the son's unrestricted and undisciplined life was to be found in mud amongst the swine. Ankle deep in sin, found within the mud of immorality, the Prodigal Son somehow *came to himself*. In other words, he came to his senses and realized he could not live without the guidance of the father. The son humbles himself, repents and thus, begins his journey back home, with the hope of becoming no more than one of his father's hired servants.

However, we are told that as the son draws near, it is the father who runs to greet his son and to kiss him profusely. Because the son repented from his improper use of his time, his talent, his energy and his money, and was not afraid to humble himself and to confess before the father, the father in loving response, clothes the son with the best robe, puts a ring on his finger and kills the fatted calf in preparation to *make merry*.

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the father in today's parable is God the Father, and in many ways, we are like the Prodigal Son. The lesson from this Gospel of Saint Luke teaches us that if we repent from our sin and immorality, essentially a life away from God, and humble ourselves before Him and confess our transgressions, God will exalt us as He exalts the Prodigal Son.

*Continues on p. 3 >>>*

## FROM THE DESK OF FATHER ANDREW >>> *Continued from p. 1*

When we come to God in humility and repentance, from the mud of our immorality, He has reassured us that He will not send us away but will run with open arms to greet us. The Gospel lesson teaches us that our Heavenly Father not only rejoices with the Angels of heaven when one of His sons or daughters returns home but He also exalts them as well.

All the above is reaffirmed from that Sunday's Epistle reading (I Cor. 6:12-20). Saint Paul again reminds us that we may find ourselves separated from God because of the misuse of our free will. God created us with the ability to freely make choices and Saint Paul write "... *all things are lawful for me, but not all things are useful. All things are lawful for me but I will not be enslaved by anything.*" Therefore, we are encouraged to make wise decisions and set proper boundaries or we may find ourselves in the mud of immorality among the swine, away from our loving Father.

Saint Paul continues on to remind that *initially* through our Baptisms and *continually* through the partaking of the Eucharist we truly become and remain members of Christ's Body here on earth. Because we are members of Christ's Body we are offered true access to the Holy Spirit who can and will help us use correct judgment and proper discernment in our decision making.

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us continue to tap into that power and grace and pray that the Holy Spirit continues to help us make the right decisions, to help move us toward repentance and confession, like the Prodigal Son, in our continual attempt to make our way back home to God the Father, so that He may exalt us, so that we may in turn exalt Him for all eternity.