

THE TRIODION IS A TIME OF PREPARATION

The *Triodion* is a book that contains the liturgical texts and hymns used by our Church in Her services during the special period that begins with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee and ends on Holy and Great Saturday. The *Triodion* can be divided into the following three parts: i) The first three weeks preceding Great Lent; ii) Great Lent (i.e. the period from Clean Monday until Palm Sunday; and iii) Holy Week. This book is referred to as the *Triodion* because many of the Canons (specific hymns chanted during the Orthros) in this book are not comprised of a full set of eight or nine odes; rather, they contain only three odes (tri = three + odes). Of course, there are several Canons comprised of a complete set of odes in this book; however, since the majority contain only three odes, the entire book was characterized as the *Triodion*.

Additionally, the entire time period during which this book is used has also come to be known as and referred to as the Triodion. The Triodion, therefore, is both a liturgical book as well as a period of the Church calendar year.

The purpose of the entire Triodion period is none other than to prepare us (through fasting, prayer, and repentance) to receive our Lord as He comes voluntarily to suffer and be crucified, and so we can participate in His Passion and His Resurrection. Thus, in order to prime us for the spiritual struggles and fasting of Great Lent, the holy fathers wisely decided to set forth the following themes from the Gospel during the first three Sundays of the Triodion: i) the Publican and Pharisee; ii) the Prodigal Son; and iii) the Second Coming.

Since the holy fathers knew that humility is the foundation and initial starting point of our salvation, whereas pride and vainglory not only serve as a humungous obstacle for salvation but also have the ability to tear a person down from the height of virtue, they appointed that the parable of the Publican and Pharisee be used as a trustworthy testimonial of this truth.

Through the Pharisee we are taught that arrogance and conceit are a great evil that must be avoided, and that we should not think highly of ourselves. Conversely, through the publican, we are instructed just how beneficial humility is, that we must embrace it, and that we must never look down on and disregard others—because as the Scriptures state, “**The Lord opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble**” (James 4:6). A sinful person who repents is more pleasing to God than a righteous man who boasts in his accomplishments.

Wherefore, what was the Lord's ruling for these two people? "This man [i.e. the publican]," He says, "went down justified **rather** than the other [i.e. the Pharisee]" (Lk. 18:14). The word "rather" is used to signify "**instead of**" the other: it means "**and not**" the other.

This parable reveals to us the following two things: First, that none of us should boast in our accomplishments, even if we happen to possess many virtues. Second, that even if we have committed many sins and fallen into the depth of evil, if we pray to God with a humble heart and a contrite spirit like the publican, He can show His mercy on us and justify us.