

²² And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord;

²³ (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

²⁴ And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

²⁵ And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

²⁶ And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

²⁷ And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

²⁸ Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

²⁹ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

³⁰ For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

³¹ Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

³² A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

³³ And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

³⁴ And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

³⁵ (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

³⁶ And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

³⁷ And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.

³⁸ And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

³⁹ And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

⁴⁰ And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

When the Mother of God brought her forty-day old Son to the temple, she was obeying the tenets of Hebrew Church Law. The first-born son in every Hebrew family had to be consecrated to God. This requirement was a way of reminding the nation of the mercy shown to them when God put to death all of the first-born sons of Egypt, as punishment to the Egyptian Pharaoh for not freeing the Hebrew people as He had commanded him to do. Only the Hebrew first-born were spared. In memory of this mercy, Moses' Law required the consecration to God all of Hebrew first-born sons.

By obeying Moses' Law, the Mother of God shows us a most important lesson. Often in our spiritual life we pick and choose what commandments we want to follow and ignore those that we don't want to or think that are not important. We choose what (if any) days on which we want to keep the fast. If we are tired or just plain lazy, we will skip a required church service. We

justify our sins by claiming we couldn't help ourselves, we had no choice. But the Mother of God emphatically shows us how wrong we are when we do this. She consecrated her Son to God. But He is God. How does one consecrate God to God? She even brought the sacrifice of two fledgling doves.

Why did the Mother of God follow what for her was an unnecessary law . By doing so she makes a firm statement and example to all that every one of God's commandments is a requirement, not a choice. In obeying all of the commandments, we are showing God our love and gratitude for everything that He does for us. When we willfully break a commandment, we are in rebellion to God and risk losing salvation. If the Mother of God obeyed all of the commandments, even when they clearly did not apply to her, how will we be able to justify ourselves when we stand in judgement in front of God?

The second important lesson is given to us this weekend is found in this Sunday's Gospel reading.

¹¹ And he said, A certain man had two sons:

¹² And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his* living.

¹³ And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

¹⁴ And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

Lost and Found

Luke Chapter 15 : 8

¹⁵ And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

¹⁶ And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

¹⁷ And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

¹⁹ And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

²⁰ And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

²¹ And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

²² But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:

²³ And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry:

²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

²⁵ Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

²⁶ And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

²⁷ And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

²⁸ And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

²⁹ And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

³⁰ But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

³¹ And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

³² It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

What this parable teaches us is that the only safe place we have is in the House of our Father. Leaving this sanctuary for us is deadly. The Father in the parable is God and His House is Christ's Church. Leaving the safety of the Church and Her commandments always results in our eventual spiritual death. We are the younger son anytime that we sin. The longer that we remain in our sinful state the more we are in danger of losing salvation. Only through repentance (returning to the Father's House) are we able to save ourselves.

To be able to do this, we need to come to a firm realization of the danger that we are in. And we need to sincerely and humbly want to return. What is absolutely amazing is that no matter how far away we fall and how long we remain away, our Father earnestly awaits our return. With great compassion, He runs out to meet us, to accept us back no matter how evil we have been. There is no sin that God will not forgive if we come to Him in sincere, profound repentance. What an important lesson this is for us as we approach Great Lent, a time especially set aside for us to examine our hearts and to fully return to our Father's House.

May God bless us with His divine Grace to help us both learn from these lessons and find the inner will to implement them in our spiritual lives.

With Love in Christ,
Archpriest Serge Kotar