

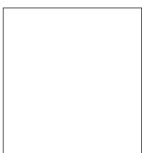
## WEEKLY MEDITATION

### THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

In both the story of the prodigal son and in last week's gospel (the Publican and the Pharisee, Luke 18:10-14), we have two figures who embody the meaning of repentance, the publican in the one, and the prodigal son in the other. These two Sundays are important in that they are preparatory Sundays for Great Lent. As such, they express the same theme as that of the Great Fast, which is repentance. But repentance is not something that is to be limited to Lent. God forbid! According to St. Isaac the Syrian, it is the goal of our entire life. He said, "this life is given to you for repentance, do not waste it on other things!" Truly, we would do well to meditate often on these two parables of Jesus, as showing us the path to Heaven.

The beauty of the parable of the prodigal son is that in addition to the wayward son himself, who is an image of repentance, we have an image of God the Father in the father in the parable. All of our fathers have failed us to one degree or another. Some of our fathers have been weak, or mean, or emotionally or physically absent, or lacking in compassion. Some have even been abusive. Yet others of us have had very good fathers. But all fall far short when compared with God the Father, who is the very model of perfect fatherhood. He is "the father of the fathers", and it is from him alone that every earthly father ultimately received his good fatherly traits. He is the perfect father, the one perfect in strength, in holiness, in justice, in patience, in love, in compassion: the one who can never fail us. We would miss the whole point of the parable if we didn't get Jesus' point – that we are all wayward sons (or daughters) of God the Father. And yet He hasn't given up on us. Even still, God loves us and wants us back. Won't you return? The way is marked out for us, it is the way of repentance.

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